



ENGLISH  
POEMS  
ON  
PROPHET  
MOHAMMAD

EDITED BY  
MASOOD UL HASAN

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**Viva Books**

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First Published 2015

Viva Books Private Limited

- 4737/23, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002  
Tel. 011-42242200, 23258325, 23283121, Email: [vivadelhi@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivadelhi@vivagroupindia.net)
- 76, Service Industries, Shirvane, Sector 1, Nerul, Navi Mumbai 400 706  
Tel. 022-27721273, 27721274, Email: [vivamumbai@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivamumbai@vivagroupindia.net)
- Megh Tower, Old No. 307, New No. 165, Poonamallee High Road, Maduravoyal, Chennai 600 095  
Tel. 044-23780991, 23780992, 23780994, Email: [vivachennai@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivachennai@vivagroupindia.net)
- B-103, Jindal Towers, 21/1A/3 Darga Road, Kolkata 700 017  
Tel. 033-22816713, Email: [vivakolkata@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivakolkata@vivagroupindia.net)
- 7, Sovereign Park Apts., 56-58, K. R. Road, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru 560 004  
Tel. 080-26607409, Email: [vivabangalore@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivabangalore@vivagroupindia.net)
- 101-102, Moghal Marc Apartments, 3-4-637 to 641, Narayanguda, Hyderabad 500 029  
Tel. 040-27564481, Email: [vivahyderabad@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivahyderabad@vivagroupindia.net)
- First Floor, Beevi Towers, SRM Road, Kaloore, Kochi 682 018  
Tel. 0484-2403055, 2403056, Email: [vivakochi@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivakochi@vivagroupindia.net)
- 232, GNB Road, Beside UCO Bank, Silpukhuri, Guwahati 781 003  
Tel. 0361-2666386, Email: [vivaguwahati@vivagroupindia.net](mailto:vivaguwahati@vivagroupindia.net)

[www.vivagroupindia.com](http://www.vivagroupindia.com)

ISBN: 978-81-309-3071-8

Published by Vinod Vasishtha for Viva Books Private Limited, 4737/23, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002.

Printed and bound by Thomson Press, New Delhi.

SUB-0009, SSUB-00091

## Contents

<i>Preface</i>		<i>ix</i>
<i>Historical Introduction</i>		1
William Langland	: Makamede	34
John Lydgate	: Of Machomet	36
S.T. Coleridge	: Mahomet	40
Robert Southey	: Mohammed – A Fragment	42
Hamilton M. Macleod	: Mohammed – I (Extracts)	48
„	: Mohammed – II (Extracts)	52
Richard Monckton Milnes	: Mohammed and the Assassin	57
„	: Mohammed and the Blind Abdullah	59
Bayard Taylor	: The Birth of the Prophet	62
Sir Edwin Arnold	: Muhammad's Journey to Heaven	66
„	: Muhammad in the Cemetery	71
„	: The Prophet's Oath	72
John Greenleaf Whittier	: Requit	75
Cassamally Jairazbhoy	: The Call Divine	77

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammad*

Sir Nizamat Jung	: The Blessed Messenger	81
„	: 'My Poverty is My Pride'	83
„	: Quba	84
„	: A Prayer in the Prophet's Shrine, Medina	86
Adam U-Shaikh	: Minstrel of God, Muhammad	90
A. Rauf Luther	: Mohammad Love of Gracious God	92
„	: Report of First Revelation	93
„	: First Public Address	94
„	: His Followers Tortured	95
„	: His Appearance	96
„	: Arrival at Medina	97
„	: Blessed Names of Mohammad	98
Krishna Srinivas	: Muhammad (Extracts)	103
Kamala (Das) Surayya	: Ya! Mohammed	109
David Abdal-Hayy Moore	: Man Among Us	111
„	: The Prophet Muhammad Walked In	114
„	: The Prophet Muhammad Arose One Morning	116
„	: Muhammad's Birth	118
„	: Sparrow on the Prophet's Tomb	120
Abdul Majeed Khan	: Mohammad's Profession	123
„	: The Call of the Inner Consciousness	124

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammad*

„	: Treatment of the Captives	125
„	: Character and Manners	126
„	: The Last Hajj of Our Prophet	127
S.L. Peeran	: Message of Islam	130
„	: Last Hajj	132
Alamgir Hashmi	: The Prophet	135
Umer O. Thasneem	: Taif Proves Deaf	138
„	: Badr Bravado	140
Syed Ameeruddin	: The Last Prophet	143
<i>Appendices</i>		144
Thomas Carlyle	: Hero as a Prophet (Extracts)	146
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	: Mahomet's Song	150
„	: Mahomet Speaks	153
„	: Plan of the Proposed Play on the Prophet	156
R.M. Rilke	: The Calling of Mohammed	158
Inayat Khan	: Amin, the Faithful Trustee (Gist of the Play)	160
Isabel Anderson	: The Green Turban (Gist of the Play)	164
Golam Mostofa	: Song of Adulation for the Holy Prophet	167

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammad*

Kazi Nazrul Islam	: Oh Bulbul	169
”	: Son of Amina	170
Sharfood-din al-Busiri	: <i>Kasida-i-Burda</i> (Extract from English translation)	172
<i>Glossary</i>		174

## Preface

Poems in honour of the Prophet of Islam (*Na'ats*) are a familiar feature of Muslim societies of the East, and so are their literary collections in the major and regional languages of Asia and Africa. Obviously, due to denominational realities comparable panegyrics were non-existent in European languages and English until the end of the eighteenth century. Anti-Mohammad allusions often figured in medieval English poetry and metrical romances, and still more frequently later in English drama. Even the positive poems, written about him much later, have not been collected in a single volume so far. The present anthology is a modest attempt to address the desideratum in English constructively. Even though small in number, these poems represent a noteworthy and liberal aspect of English verse. It is also hoped that it may contribute, howsoever slightly, to the noble cause of interfaith understanding and tolerance, needed in ever-mounting measure in the midst of renewed ultra-fundamentalism and bigotry, and the ensuing, violent counter-action in the world. Islam has been a great civilizing force in history, and a positive understanding of its Prophet's character and humanistic ideals may, hopefully, serve the cause of peace and mitigation of mutual acrimony and dissonance.

The 'historical' introduction seeks to trace and explain the myths and prejudices against the Prophet in the West, that deterred positive notice of his work and character, and impeded the objective appraisal of a rival faith by the Western writers in general. In later times these myths came to be used as a political strategy to

demoralize and dampen the spirits of his triumphant followers. The anti-Mohammad ferment contaminated the European mind against his message. This was reflected in European literature and English letters too.

The medieval English poems refer to the Prophet fantastically and skewedly, and the tradition pervades the English poems from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. Elizabethan and Jacobean drama abounds in malignant and ignorant allusions to him. The rational and liberal thinking of the European Enlightenment, however, mollified the mood a little and sporadically. Goethe's palliative touch punctuated the trend, and a poem each by Coleridge and Southey signalled a brief break, but Gibbon's magisterial views and Carlyle's broad-minded exposition of hero as a prophet clinched the issue. Bigotry and misgivings did not vanish completely, but in the nineteenth century more positive notes were expressed by some British and American poets. This was a bold and humanistic approach of some minor poets, but it paved the way for subsequent encomiums by poets from the Indian subcontinent.

In the India-Pakistan region three book-length biographies of the Prophet in verse came out during the last thirty years – Rauf Luther's *The Epic of Faith*, Majeed Khan's *Muhammad*, and Thasneem's *The Soul of the Desert*. Two long poems on the Prophet by Krishna Srinivas and S.L. Peeran were also published during these years. All the five long poems are represented in the anthology through extracts from them. Extracts from a negative long poem by the nineteenth century minor poet Hamilton Macleod are also included in the anthology. Two copious and adverse fourteenth century references by Langland and Lydgate were too long to be quoted in their entirety, and so extracts from these poems are reproduced here. Incidentally, the inclusions also reflect the broad, chronological spectrum of this collection of poems – from the fourteenth century to the preset times.

Nizam-at Jung was the first Indian poet with more than half-a-dozen poems in English written in honour of the Prophet. Five of these are included here. Daniel (Abdal-Hayy) Moore, author of the largest number of moving, English *Na'ats*, offers a banquet of soul-stirring panegyrics, but because of the constraints of space, regretfully only half-a-dozen of them have been selected. Kamala (Das) Surayya's *Ya! Mohammed* was originally done in Malayalam, but its English version had her approval, and it is incorporated because of its moving quality and her acknowledged status as a renowned Indian poet of English. Each text in the anthology is prefaced with a brief introductory note on the poet and the extract.

In view of their pioneering role in arousing literary interest in the Prophet of Arabia translations of two poems of Goethe and the plan of his proposed play on him, and extracts from Carlyle's momentous lecture 'Prophet as a Hero' are given in appendices. R.M. Rilke, the famous German poet's attractive poem *The Calling of Mohammad* (in J.B. Leishman's translation) is reproduced in a separate appendix. Gists of two modern English plays, relevant to the anthology's theme, appear in yet another appendix. As no English poems from Bangladesh on the Prophet are available, English translations of three *Na'ats* – two by the internationally known poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, and one by another renowned Bangladeshi poet – Golam Mostofa – are included in an appendix. This gives a fuller representation to the Indian subcontinent – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. An extract from the English translation of the most famous Arabic ode on the Prophet, *Kasida-i-Burda* comprises the last appendix. Hopefully, these appendices would be found interesting and informative in content and variety. A glossary has been added to the anthology to define the special terminology and the quaint words of Middle English.

Many debts incurred in connection with this anthology call for grateful acknowledgement. Valuable logistical support was

provided by Mah Seema. Naved Masood, Dr Shad Naved (Nehru Fellow, Nehru Museum and Library, New Delhi), and Aiman Mustafa (Research Scholar at Emory University, Atlanta) helped me procure some fugitive texts. Prof. Tariq Rizvi of Ohio University (Lima, USA) extended constant encouragement by his inspiring interest in the project. I have greatly benefited from the holdings of the Maulana Azad Library (Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh). The Principal and Librarian of Carey Library (Serampore College, Serampore, West Bengal) kindly provided the photocopy of a rare book, *Mohammad – A Long Poem* by Hamilton M. Macleod. Dr Ata Khurshid of Maulana Azad Library (AMU) took special pains to procure for me a photocopy of Rauf Luther's *The Epic of Faith* from Islamabad (Pakistan). Through the kind courtesy of Prof. Niaz Zaman (of Dhaka) Prof. Nashid Kamal and Prof. Farida Majid (both of Dhaka) supplied me copies of translations of the poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam and Golam Mostofa respectively. Daniel (Abdal-Hayy) Moore (USA), Prof. Alamgir Hashmi (Pakistan), Prof. Abdul Majeed Khan, Dr Umer Thasneem, Dr S.L. Peeran (and his publisher, Bizz Buzz, Bangalore) and Prof. Syed Ameeruddin graciously permitted the use of their works and copyright materials. As president of the World Poetry Society Intercontinental (WPSI), publisher of K. Srinivas's poem *Mohammad*, the latter also accorded permission to include extracts from the work. Prof. S. Zaheer H. Jafri (of Delhi University) and Prof. A.R. Kidwai (Director, UGC Academic Staff College, AMU, Aligarh) took stimulating interest in the project, and the latter also guided and greatly helped in the choice of a helpful publisher. I offer sincere thanks to all of them individually.

Aligarh

Masood ul Hasan

## Historical Introduction

Scriptures and prophets don't revile one another, yet their zealous and misguided votaries revel in demonizing and decrying the adherents of the sister faiths and their apostles. This is evident from the history of the people of the Book. Despite the near congruity in the core tenets of the three major faiths of the Book unending conflicts and acrimony have marred their history and relations. Jews took the early Christians as poachers and wreckers of their sacred fold. They abhorred the new creed, persecuted its believers, and were later hounded themselves and stigmatized by the Christians in legends and practice. An undying tradition of mutual hatred and calumny has persisted all along. The Judeo-Muslim history also resounds with notes of virulent prejudices and debates with glaring misprojections and fabrications. But barring a few episodes of transgression of treaties in the early days of Islam the inter-community relations between Islam and the Jews remained generally free of gory hostilities until the disputed establishment of the state of Israel in the mid-twentieth century. In fact, despite their religious differences, the Jews were generally welcome in the Muslim lands, and were given shelter and support during their persecution in Europe, especially after the institution of the infamous Spanish Inquisition.

Though their beginning promised to be peaceful, the annals of Christo-Muslim relations are marked by dark shadows, not infrequently stained with blood. In his early teens Muhammad accompanied his uncle to Syria on a business trip, and at Basra he

is reported to have been warmly greeted by a learned monk, called Bahira, who recognized the marks of the Messiah in him, prophesied in some earlier scriptures. Many years later, Muhammad once again received recognition and respect from another learned Christian of Mecca. Waraqa bin Naufil, a cousin of Khadija, was a recent convert to Christianity, well-versed in the Christian lore. He had also translated into Arabic some portions of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> When Muhammad returned home, shaken and overawed by his numinous experience in the cave at Mt Hira, Khadija offered him consolation and exhortation, and took him to her learned cousin, Waraqa, who also cheered him, assuring him that it was a genuine call from God, and that the Bible had prophesied the advent of a Prophet after Jesus Christ. In a subsequent casual meeting in the Kaaba, Waraqa again reiterated his earlier assurance, and forewarned Muhammad of the challenges and hardships that lay ahead.<sup>2</sup> Besides these instances of moral and psychological support, evidence of a more substantial support from a Christian quarter to the nascent Islam is also on record. When the small community of early Muslims faced persecution in Mecca, the Prophet advised them to migrate to Abyssinia. They were pursued there by the emissaries of the malevolent Koreish who petitioned Negus, the ruler there, to extradite the fugitives. Negus questioned the refugees about their new faith, and satisfied by their answers, granted them asylum and hospitality. This was not only a big relief to the migrants, but an important moral booster to the cause of the early Islam from a Christian king.

Besides, the Christian's amiable attitude to the new religious community is endorsed by the Najran Christians' embassy of friendship to Medina, when the Prophet was beset with the twin threats of the irreconcilable Meccans' secret negotiations with the Jews. After a tripartite debate – involving the Jews too – the Christian delegation acknowledged the fairness of the Prophet's

stand, and promised neutrality. As a further mark of goodwill they also asked for the nomination of a Muslim arbitrator to settle any dispute among the people of Najran.<sup>3</sup> However, the Christians of the North, probably with nearer-to-the Power syndrome of their comparatively closer proximity to the imperial seat, seem to have been more impatient of the new faith. Their pride in closeness to the Holy Lands may have also aroused credal vigilantism. It has also been suggested that Syria's denser Hellenisation promoted superiority complex in the Syrians as against the callower Southerners.<sup>4</sup> Be it as it was, but it is significant that the Muslims' early skirmishes with the Christians occurred in Syria. The assassination of the Prophet's envoy to the governor at Basrah – or the cold blooded murder of the peaceful preachers by their hosts – led to the first major strife with the Christians, and resultant military campaign to Mu'tah in 629.<sup>5</sup> This and the subsequent series of encounters and conquests in the Christian lands must have caused rancour, prompting Christians' self-assuaging fabrication of myths about the spuriousness of the Muslim faith. St John of Damascus (707-54) is said to have spun the yarn that Bahira (a Christian monk of Arian belief) and later, Sergius (another monk) had tutored and led Mohammed to found the new faith as a truncated version of Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Two biographical events of Muhammad's short chance-meeting with Bahira, and Waraqa's reassuring words to Muhammad might have been at the root of the myth. Likewise, the Arian school's denial of Jesus Christ's divine sonship, resembling the Koranic version, might have further fed St John's speculative fancy. The Prophet's alleged tutoring by the dissenting monks led to the notion of Islam as a heresy, and Muhammad as an imposter and arch-schismatic. St John was also the initiator of the blatant allegation of sensuality of the Prophet.

In the eighth and ninth centuries Saracens' victories in Southern Europe were interpreted in religious terms. They were

also seen as political disasters, and contemporary records describe them as "terrible plague" and "terrible affliction".<sup>7</sup> But at the social level Arab culture and cuisine found favour not only in Spain and Sicily, but affected the culture of the neighbouring regions as well. There is no evidence of any general animosity or mistrust of the Muslims. On the other hand, there were instances of mutual help between the Christians and Muslims. Some Christian leaders are reported to have engaged Muslim mercenaries to protect St Peter's Church in Rome when it was attacked by the Saracens in 846,<sup>8</sup> and a few years later the people of Naples offered the use of their harbour to the Saracen ships.<sup>9</sup> However, some notes of distrust and communitarianism arose when in mid-ninth century a Christian preacher, Eulugius, who travelled to Christian Spain to do anti-Islamic propaganda was murdered, which was perceived by Christian leadership at Rome as a general Muslim threat.<sup>10</sup> About half a century later the alliance of the Pisans and the Genoese forces against Mujahid (1015-1021) sharpened the threat of perception, and need of a front against the Muslim enemy, became evident in the beginning of the eleventh century.<sup>11</sup> The Barbastra campaign (1063-64) clinched the issue of a common enemy,<sup>12</sup> and proved to be a prelude to the crusades. With the Norman conquest of the Muslim Sicily (1096-99) the Crusades had formally begun.

To a large extent the Crusades (1095-1207) were a strategy to abate and resolve the inner tensions of the Christendom rather than a reaction to any anti-Christian activity on the Holy Land under the Muslim rule. For more than three hundred years since its conquest in 638 by Caliph Umar, the Jews and Christians were allowed the privilege of worship there till the early years of the eleventh century.<sup>13</sup> In 1054 the schism took place in Eastern Christianity and in 1074 the Pope wanted to send military assistance to the Eastern Christendom threatened by the Turks.<sup>14</sup> The tension between the Pope and the emperor for superiority threatened the

fabric of Christendom, so the bogey of a common enemy became a pressing necessity. The political aspect of the Crusades was admitted and highlighted retrospectively by some fourteenth century Christian leaders as well. Catherine of Sienna in her letters (1370-75) to Pope Gregory XI held that the crusades were the "first and foremost means of forcing Christianity to abandon its fratricidal wars, and to acquire internal peace and agreement".<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Philippe de Mézières, tutor to Charles VI of France, expressed the view that the crusades might have "helped resolve and terminate the long war between France and England".<sup>16</sup> Also, it was suggested by Hugh of Cluny (1024-1109) that the tussle between Pope Gregory VI and Emperor Henry IV highlighted the necessity of Christian unity.<sup>17</sup> Karen Armstrong has also developed elaborately the theme of necessary Christian unity as the motivating force behind the Crusades.<sup>18</sup> So, the war propaganda was more than a century old before the actual crusades, and the anti-Muslim word-mongering centered on the demeaning of Mohammad as the easy way to discredit his religion. The campaign of disinformation preceded the wars and snow-balled during the succeeding ages.

The Arabic *Risala* by Abdul Masih ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, a *mozareb* (Muslim convert to Christianity) polemicist was a fresh source of propaganda material against Muhammad. It revived the Johnsian myth of the Prophet as the protégée of heretical monks, Bahira and Sergius, who helped him to fabricate the Koran. The *Risala* also claimed to expose his sensuousness.<sup>19</sup> Its Latin translation by Mark of Toledo was very popular in the Middle Ages, when fairy-tale material was introduced in the Prophet's biography, and the trained-bird-ruse of revelation and epilepsy was widely circulated.<sup>20</sup> The Bahira-Sergius myth was reinvented as the instigation of Muhammad by a frustrated Roman Cardinal.<sup>21</sup> Romantic versions of the Prophet's marriage with Zainab bint Jhash (divorcee of his freed bondsman and adopted son) were forged by Fra Fidenzio and

Raymond.<sup>22</sup> This relentless industry of denigration painted him as an impostor, heretic, arch-enemy of Christianity and a friend of anti-Christ. This vitiated the literary imagination of the West. Anti-Saracenic, Islamophobic and Muhammad-bashing imagery and motifs pervaded the romances and allegoric epics of medieval South-Western Europe to sustain the war-propaganda; and the trend continued long after the actual crusades were over.

The metrical romances connected with Richard the lion-hearted and Charlemagne and his paladins celebrate their triumphant engagements with Saracen "soudans" (Sultans), knights and their coreligionists are liberally besprinkled with references to Muhammad, frequent swearings by 'Mahound', "Mahond: or "god Mahoun". The Saracens are described as idolatrous, venerating the "mawmettes" (idols of Muhammad), calling him to aid in crises and perils. In a twelfth century Roland romance a Saracen giant prays in vain: "The expiring Ferragus loudly called on his god Mahomet, but Roland laughed for that cry, / and said, "Mahoun sickerly".<sup>23</sup> Muhammad was sometimes imaged as an evil-helper and a crafty idol-maker too. In his campaign of idol-eradication, Roland arrives at a Saracenic coastal town guarded by a marvellous statue made by the Prophet himself. The statue faced "south-right" and was held immovable; and indestructible until the town fell to a Christian prince.<sup>24</sup> Along with idolatry, wizardry was also associated with the Prophet – an indirect admission of his successors' technological skill in the twelfth century. Anglo-Norman and Anglo-Saxon romances also echoed the common Western misconception about the Saracens' worship of Muhammad's idol. Bevis, a knight of the Arthurian cycle arrives in Damascus to seek the hand of the Sultan's daughter, and is "entangled in a crowd of Saracens, who were preparing a sacrifice to an idol representing Mahomet". Incensed at the iniquity, the knight seizes the idol by its crown of gold and throws it into the dirt. In the ensuing commotion he kills a large

number of Saracens, and is captured and thrown into a dungeon by the Sultan.<sup>25</sup> The trend of presenting "grotesque images" continued down the ages, and in the twelfth century received impetus by the increasing number of Muslim converts, "Christian travellers to Muslim lands and a zealous propagatory clergy".<sup>26</sup> According to a modern scholar, Matthew Dimmock, the fable of speaking brazen idol of the Prophet was found earlier in the theological works of Robert Grosseteste (c. 1175-1253) and Roger Bacon (c. 1214-94).<sup>27</sup> The trend of misrepresentation continued in the West down the centuries with shifting focus on the Prophet's icon status, apostasy, and schismatic subversion of Christianity, and the presaged anti-Christ. Dante placed him in the pit of the ninth gulf of the eighth circle of the hell among the arch heretics of history (*Divine Comedy*, Canto xxxviii, St 31-58).

The first notable introduction of Islam and its Prophet in the West is found in Robert Ketton who completed the first translation of the Koran, commissioned by Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny. Incidentally, like St John of Damascus earlier, Peter also considered Islam as an offshoot of Christian heresy.<sup>28</sup> According to a casual report, a Celtic cross with the Arabic logo (*Bismillah-e rabbul A'lameen*) of the ninth century was discovered in Ireland, suggesting a possible earlier link in Britain.<sup>29</sup> Thomas Becket (1118-1170) was said to be born of a Saracenic mother,<sup>30</sup> and Richard the Lion-hearted was believed for long to be the son of a Saracenic mother too,<sup>31</sup> suggesting the possibility of a Saracenic link with Britain in the twelfth century. Armstrong reports that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries marriages between the Franks and Muslims were not unheard of, and their offsprings were recognized as the *Pullani*.<sup>32</sup> In the fourteenth century an English or Scottish princess is said to have been called by the Arabic name of *Shams-al Doha* and was reported to have been married to the Moroccan king Abd-al-Hasan, the Mirinid".<sup>33</sup> Whatever the genesis of such mixed marriages – military

conquest, political adjustment or evangelizing – they suggest a Franko-Muslim link in parts of the West despite the general air of prejudices and politico-religious animosity. Nevertheless, the Crusades had perpetuated the fictive image of the Prophet as reflected in the medieval epics and romances as noted above.

William Langland's *Piers the Plowman* (1362) is the first notable English poem to contain a semi-elaborate reference to Prophet Muhammad. The poem is an allegorical appraisal, through dream-device, of the contemporary English moral landscape. Muhammad is depicted in the pits of hell, condemned as a heretic, and frustrated Church-leader, who abandoned Christianity to fulfill his personal ambitions.<sup>34</sup> This was in line with the popular medieval view. Langland also lends a militant role to Muhammad under instruction from Satan who "set Mahomet at the catapult, to throw stones, and to harass them with hooked stones, and claptraps".<sup>35</sup> Langland was a cleric, and his hell bound 'Mahond' is presented in the religious context, but his well-known contemporary, Chaucer mentions 'Mahoun' unviciously, though the poet's antagonism to the Muslims is unconcealed in the *Man of Law's Tale*. Hearing of the exquisite beauty of Custance, the Roman emperor's daughter, the Sowdan (sultan) of Syria seeks her hand in marriage. Hoping to win him over to Christianity, Custance consents. But the Sultan's councillors dissuade him: "They trowne, that no Cristen prince wolde fayn/ Wedden his child under our laws sweete, / That us was taught by Mahoun, our prophet" (ll. 222-224). But the Sultan was even willing to convert for her sake. Custance and the Christian leaders agree to the match. But the Sultan's mother is opposed to the inter-faith marriage, and summons the councillors to plead against the alliance as "The hooly laws of our Al-Koran, / Given by God's message to Mahomete" did not permit and she would rather part with her life than part with the sacred law (ll. 331-336). The reverential reference to the Prophet and his law above is obviously

the statement of a believer-mother, and Chaucer shows some objectivity in reporting it, even in the case of a popular *bete-noire* of his age. Besides, even though the Christians' assent to Custance's marriage is motivated by the prospect of destroying "mometrie", no harsh epithets are used for the Prophet.

A sterner note, however, was struck by William Dunbar (1460-1513), the laureate of Scotland, and a cleric of minor rank, who depicts Muhammad in the *Dance of Deadly Sins* as leading the fiends' revelleries in the hell. John Lydgate (1370-1451) also a priest and probably the most voluminous of English poets, presented Muhammad as a "false prophet" in a story in the *Fall of Princes*, practicing witchcraft especially to entice his first wife for her wealth and influence. Jumbling and juggling with history, the Prophet is credited with military conquests actually achieved by his successors. In the poem Muhammad is shown leading a group of fiends, he calls loudly for entertainment, and they gather around him, shouting and revelling. A tailor and cobbler enact a joint, and the tailor overthrows the hefty cobbler, and is made a knight. Curiously, unlike Dante's tortured and agonized Muhammad, he is presented here as a semi-hilarious character in hell, unsinged by its fires and torments, indulging in gaiety, and enjoying the customary professional rivalry between the two artisans.<sup>36</sup> The myth of epileptic fits is also repeated by Lydgate elsewhere as also his death by poisoning.<sup>37</sup>

The Fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the rise of the Ottoman empire seemed to add fresh political powder to anti-Islam ferment in the Christian West, and despite the Catholic monarch's extinction of the Muslim Granada in 1492, the perception of the Muslim threat continued till long after. The beginning of the conversion of the Bosnians to Islam, abandoning Greek Christianity and Bogomilism in 1463, Turkish conquest of Belgrade and Rhodes in early sixteenth century fuelled the anti-Islam campaign, of which the calumnation

of Muhammad had been a strategic exercise. The institution of the order of Jesuits in 1516 was also a part of this great design. The Turks replaced the Saracens as the *bete noire* of the Christian writers, but the founder of Islam continued to be the focus of attack. Writers led the front in England, and in the sixteenth century they seemed to have a more direct cause of involvement. Turks progressively replaced or were bracketed with, the Saracens,<sup>38</sup> and 'Mawmette' signified a false god. Spenser seems to have altogether skipped any direct reference to Muhammad. He equated Islam and Turks with the Catholics as against the Puritans (*Faerie Queene*, I.V). His contemporary Christopher Marlowe was more specific in his projection of Islam as a false and delusive faith, as exemplified in Tamburlaine's ranting boast of his own invincibility. Vaunting his own crushing victory over the Turks, he denounces sanctity of the al-Koran as "all the heaps of superstitious books". He blasts the alleged worship of the Prophet. Copies of the Holy Book are burnt, and in a fit of rage he challenges the Prophet to perform a miracle or "send a furious whirlwind down" in relief of his devotees. Tamburlaine repeats the usual medieval notion of the Prophet's infernal location, and gives vent to his own atheism and arrogant ego thus:

"Well, soldiers, Mahomet remains in hell;  
He cannot hear this voice of Tamburlaine.  
Seek out another godhead to adore,  
The God that sits in heaven, if any god,  
For he is God alone, and none but he."<sup>39</sup>

Echoing the popular anti-Muslim prejudice, Marlowe seems to have employed references to Muhammad oftener. In Shakespeare's *I Henry VI*, Charles Dauphin compares Joan La Pusella's (the future Joan of Arc) visions to some historical instances, including Muhammad's messages from God (Revelations):

"Was Mahomet inspired with a dove?  
Thou with an eagle art inspired then  
Helen, the mother of great Constantine,  
Nor yet Saint Philip's daughter  
Were like thee"<sup>40</sup>

As noticed above, the Prophet's alleged stratagem of revelations was an old fabrication of the West. Significantly, this is Shakespeare's only reference to the Prophet, although Turks and Saracens are mentioned a number of times.

Robert Greene's phantasmagorical medley *Alphonsus King of Arragon* (1591), involving the kings of the Moors, Barbary, Babylon, and Arabia and the Great Turk, alludes to Mahomet repeatedly. He is conceived here as a God (Act III, ll. 673-677), speaking from a brazen head, and this "sacred god, / That Mahomet which ruleth all over the skies" appears near the city-walk of Constantinople, and Amurack invokes his help for victory (III. ii, 823-835). But failing to get victory for the Turks against the Christians, Amurack renounces the Prophet (III. ii, 907-17). The Prophet is shown to appear in person at his temple, and his priests recount some of his recent miracles: "flakes of fire proceeding from the mouth/ Of Mahomet, that God of peerless power."<sup>41</sup>

Francis Beaumont's (1584-1616) and J. Fletcher's (1579-1625) joint production *The Knight of Malta* also bears numerous references to the Koran and Muhammad who bewails the set-backs to the Turkish army at the hands of the Christian knight Miranda:

"... I hear their sleepy Prophet howl too,  
And all their silver crescents then I saw  
Like falling meteors spent, and set for ever".<sup>42</sup>

The myth of the Prophet's divinity and his worship by Muslims finds its way into Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Persida* as well:

"And had he worshipt Mahomet for Christ,  
He might have borne me through out the world  
So well I loved and honoured the man". (III. i. 17-24)

It is notable that here no invectives, direct or indirect, are used against the Prophet, though ignorance about his human status is evident.

By the end of the sixteenth century awareness of the Muslim or Turkish identity in the context of England seemed to have sharpened considerably. In 1610 between 10000 to 12000 children were reported to have been brought from Europe as part of the tax levied on Christians living within the Turkish dominated parts Eastern Europe, and the first English convert to Islam, John Nelson, was reported in 1583.<sup>43</sup> An anonymous work *Discovery of Twenty-nine Sects in London* published in 1641 – is said to include Mahometans – and in the early 1650s a Welshman was accused of preaching the "Turkish Alcoran".<sup>44</sup> These apparently minor and stray incidents reinforced by the fact of rising Turkish political influence in Southern and Eastern Europe, prompted growing literary notice of Islam and its founder in the seventeenth century. William Bedwell's Arabic treatise was translated into English in 1615 by Field (as *Mohammad's Imposture*) and *The Life and Death of Mahomet*, attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh was recorded in the stationers' Register on 11 May, 1636 (*A Transcript of Stationers' Registers: 1554-1640; Vol. II, ed. Arbery*). Knolles's *Generall Historie of the Turks* was published in London in 1603, and ran into several editions within a few years. The first English translation of the Koran was done by Sir Alexander Ross in 1649. It was translated from the French version of Sievr du Ryer. Ross added two units to his translation on the life and death of the Prophet in which his anti-Muslim bigotry is obvious.<sup>45</sup>

In 1600 the Church of England formally adopted the Protestant creed that the Pope was the real Anti-Christ, but not the only Anti-Christ.<sup>46</sup> Martin Luther had declared in the previous century that both Pope and Mahomet represented the Anti-Christ—one from within and the other from outside the fold. To the traditional contumacious fables were now added the derisive notes against the Prophet. Francis Bacon used one such myth to illustrate the audacious folly of preposterous self-delusion: “Mahomet made the people believe that he could call a hill to him, and from the top of it offer up his prayers, for the observers of the law. The people assembled, Mahomet called the hill to come to him, again and again, and when the hill stood still, he was never a whit abashed, but said, ‘If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill’.”<sup>47</sup> Andrew Marvell made a bantering reference to the alleged epileptic origin of the Koran, comparing the Prophet to the self-deluding opponents of Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England:

Oh Mahomet! Now couldst thou rise again,  
The falling-sickness should have made thee reign,  
While Feak and Simpson would in many a tome,  
Have writ comments on thy sacred foam;  
For soon there might have passed among their rant  
Were not thou for thine own unmoved tuliplant;  
As thou must needs have owned them of thy band  
For prophesie fit to be Alcoraned.<sup>48</sup>

In his quixotic satire on the non-conformist zealots Samuel Butler (1613-1680) sarcastically asks them to imitate the Prophet of Islam:

“Th’ apostles of this fierce Religion  
Like Mahomet’s, were ass and widgeon”.<sup>49</sup>

The 'ass' and 'widgeon' symbolically refer respectively to the Prophet's celestial journey on the 'al-Borak' and the alleged trained pigeon connected with the revelations. The Non-Conformist's misguidance and imposture is again compared to the Prophet's compilation of the Koran:

"T' amend its Errors and Defects,  
With Murther, and Rebellion Texts;  
Of which there is not any one  
In all the Book to sow upon;  
And therefore (from your Tribe) the Jews  
Held Christian Doctrine forth, and Use;  
As Mahomet (your Chief) began,  
To mix them in the Alchoran:"<sup>50</sup>

Obviously, to resemble – or act like – a Mohammadan had now become a strong invective used for a political or sectarian rival. Two other references to the Prophet are unconnected with the Presbyterians and relate to the ignorant fantasy about the aerial entombment, which is used as a simile here: "But in the aery region yet, / Hangs like the Body of Mahomet".<sup>51</sup> The simile is used again as a jibe at the Non-Conformists' avowed trances:

"For spiritual Men are too Transcendent,  
That Mount their Banks, for Independent,  
To hang like Mahomet, in the Air,"<sup>52</sup>

As an Anglican, Butler was obsessed with the close resemblance of Presbyterianism with Islam.

However, a more positive view of Islam and its founder was briefly expressed in 1669 by a minor poet of the Restoration, Theophilus Gale, acknowledging the Muslims' martial strength

combined with intellectual achievements, enriching the Aristotelian legacy:

“Arabia the happy made the world so  
Preserving Arts from overthrow  
Mecha did the great stagirist admit  
Mahomet Prince of Arms, but him of Wit  
The Saracens and he  
Did joyn in Monarchie  
Long had Philosophy in that great School  
Maintained her Intellectual Rule;  
Had she not fled from Ruins of the east  
To shelter with the Eagle in the West.”<sup>53</sup>

John Dryden's references to the Prophet are also generally devoid of the usual sting. A few observations of some Muslim characters attribute virtues of justice and charity to the Apostle. In *The Conquest of Granada*, pt. 1 (1670) Abdel Melach (Chief of the Abnecerrages) exclaims: “Our holy Prophet wills that Charity/Should ev'n to birds and beasts extended be:/ None knows what fate is for himself design'd;/ The thought of human Chance should make us kind”./ So also in *Aurangzebe* (1676) Indomara, the captive queen, warns Prince Morat (Act III) against fratricidal wars of succession in the name of the Prophet: “How can our Prophet suffer you to reign,/ When he looks down and sees your brothers slain?”<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere the Prophet is presented as dispenser of destiny and success. Abdalla, king Boabelin's brother, opines in Act I scene 1 of *The Conquest of Granada*, the Second Part: “Our Prophet has declar'd by the Event./The Ozmyn is reserv'd for punishment”. In Act V, scene 2, of the same play, Alabez, the umpire of the combat, administers the oath to the defending Knight in the name of the Prophet.<sup>55</sup>

In *Don Sebastian* (1689) the Prophet is mentioned about a dozen times; but most of the time these are short, trivial and negative in nature – the most contemptuous invectives being uttered by the Christian hero, Don Sebastian.<sup>56</sup> Muley-Moloch, the Emperor of Barbary, gradually renounces Islam and the Prophet peevishly in adversity, but he is a pale shadow of Marlowe's Tamburlaine.<sup>57</sup> There is a mocking reference to the mythic pigeon too as the "help of a little Inspiration" by a rabble-rouser against the Mufti of the kingdom.<sup>58</sup>

Rise of rationalism and liberal thought in Europe in the Enlightenment era gradually encouraged religious tolerance as well, and despite the anti-Turk and anti-Islam prejudices attacks on the Prophet in secular literature showed signs of relaxation. In fact, as mentioned earlier, some casual instances of a positive view of his character and achievements may be traced from the second half of the seventeenth century. Henry Stubbe (1632-1676), a physician by profession, and an Ana-Baptist in leanings, was the first Englishman to reject the traditional bias in his *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometism*, written a couple of years before his death, but published posthumously in 1708. He rejected the fables of epilepsy and the trained dove, and tutoring by a monk or scholar, calling these fables as mere "rubbish".<sup>59</sup> Equally emphatically he dismissed the myth of the Prophet's coffin suspended in the air. Stubbe also rejected the charge of encouragement of idolatry by the Prophet, and denied his alleged sensuousness, and defended polygamy as an ethnic Arab tradition in accord with human nature, and as followed by numerous biblical Prophets too. Stubbe's narrative, however, suffers from romantic inaccuracies and flights of imagination like the Prophet's erstwhile service in a Christian army, or his visit to Spain, or his trusted companion, Ali's journey to Agra in India to recruit volunteers in aid of the Prophet. The positive view expressed by Stubbe was in peculiar contrast to the

earlier and most subsequent portrayals of the personal character of the Apostle of Allah. In the eighteenth century adverse views were expressed by Simon Ockley (*History of Saracens*, 1718). Joseph Pitt (*A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans*, 1731) reiterated the charge of imposture. George Sale's 'Preliminary Discourse' on the life of Muhammad, prefixed to his translation of the Koran (1734) summed up his message favourably: "His original design of bringing the pagan Arabs to acknowledge the true God was certainly noble, and highly to be commended".<sup>60</sup> But Sale tacitly upheld the chronic Christian allegations of personal ambitiousness and sensuality. Viscount Henry Bolingbroke (1678-1751) in his historical writings took a sympathetic view of Islam, and debunked the charge that it encouraged idolatry. Two contemporary European scholars, Adrian Reland and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing also viewed Islam favourably. Comte de Boulainvilliers formed part of the same company of intellectuals with his refreshingly enlightened biography of the Prophet *Le Vie de Mahomet* (1730). Another renowned French intellectual, Voltaire (1694-1778), however, treated the subject negatively. In his bitter biographical play, *Mahomet ou le Fanatisme* (1741) he revived the medieval fable of imposture and charge of incestuous matrimony, though in a later work on the world's great worthies he appraised him as a political genius.<sup>61</sup> In England Gibbon also paid him adequate tribute in a brief later chapter in *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Goethe's poetic tribute to the Prophet's purity and character enjoys a unique position in the world's pro-Muhammad literature. This general toning down of literary antagonism is also reflected in English literature in the marked thinning of derisive and insulting references to the Prophet's person in the eighteenth century English drama and verse. The anti-Muslim ferment still lasts, but the earlier focus shifts from the founder's person to his latest political heirs – the imperious, fratricidal Turks. Alexander

Pope's poetry is significantly devoid of any direct reference to Muhammad, but Pope's dig at Joseph Addison's peevish impatience with his rivals is phrased in an anti-Turk conceit:

Blest with each Talent, and each Art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease;  
Shou'd such a man too fond to rule alone,  
Bear, like the *Turk*, no brother near the throne;  
View him with scornful, yet jealous eyes.  
(*Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, 1734; ll. 195-200).

The closing years of the eighteenth century registered sporadic, yet an important change in the West's critique of Islam and its founder, promoted by the rise of academic reorientation of liberal thought, and developing politico-military situations. Goethe pioneered the change, and proposed to counterpoise Voltaire's vitriolic play by writing a dramatic piece of his own, which was not completed. But a poem has survived. This German poem ('Mahomet') inspired Coleridge and Southey, and Carlyle's momentous lecture on the Prophet (of Arabia) as a hero, lavishing encomiums on him, unusual for Europe, and partly reminiscent of Stubbe of the seventeenth century. Carlyle was warmly supported by a few obscure, regional English writers. The new century also registered for the first time independent English poems on Muhammad in contrast to the previous frequent brief allusions or pejorative conceits in English poems and plays. Coleridge wrote a short piece (meant to be included in an unwritten drama) in 1799, and Robert Southey composed a fairly long poem on the Prophet's migration from Mecca. The poem is positive in tone and free of customary antagonism, though in a few verses elsewhere (in his translation of *The Chronicle of El-Cid*) he does not fail to make the usual snide on his alleged sensuality. Mention has been made above of Adrian Reland and Lessing. The latter's play *Nathan the Wise* is particularly free of bigotry and prejudice.<sup>62</sup> In the twentieth

century the German poet Rilke wrote a laudatory poem worthy of mention. In France and partly in England the anti-Islam and anti-Muhammad trend, with some notable exceptions lasted longer. But the main thrust of defamation was on the Muslims' luxurious life and gender excesses. Victor Hugo's French poem was particularly vicious in argument. One suspects that the imperial policy of demoralizing the eastern people and their creed and culture as a colonialists' strategy was its determining factor. The opposite trend of tolerance was directly assignable to the liberating forces of enlightenment, and the advance of literary orientalism. Sir William Jones's translation of oriental classical texts, Emerson's critiques of Hafiz and Sa'adi, and Fitzgerald's transmogrification of Omar Khayyám, and the rich crop of kindred works eased the tension against Islam in intellectual circles, and paved the passage to Muslim themes, saints and spiritual leaders.

In the early nineteenth century the eruption of Greco-Turkish hostilities seems to have rekindled the ire of a couple of English Romantic poets. Enthused with the idealism of the French Revolution, they volunteered for military service against the Turks, and employed Turkish motifs and themes in several of their poems, decrying their barbarity, imperial postures and lustiness. Direct references to the Prophet were few, tangential and scrappy. Brief references to his tomb, and "Our Prophet's shrine" occur in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Bride of Abydos*, but swearing by him and references to the houri-infested "heathenish heaven/ Described by Mahomet" (*Don Juan*, Canto 1, St. 104), or the ignorant snide at his granting an inferior soul to women (*The Bride of Abydos*, II. 7) are some other typical instances.

Shelley's two masterpieces are overtly located in the background of Turkish hegemony as threat to liberty by the modern-day perpetrators of Islamic tyranny. *The Revolt of*

*Islam* (1818) is an allegoric odyssey of liberty, with pronounced notes of atheism and feminist independence, protests against political exploitation, and lament over the fall of Athens. Turks are the despoilers of liberty, as they themselves are currently stricken by plague and famine of divers sorts (Canto 10, stanzas 14-25). But the Prophet is mentioned in passing only once in the context of confusion and cacophony of various religious philosophies:

“And Oromaze, Joshua and Mahomet,  
Moses and Buddha, Zardusht, Brahm, and Foh,  
A tumult of strange names, which never met  
Before, as watch-words of a single woe,  
Arose; each raging votary gan to throw  
Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl  
‘Our God alone is God!’”. (Canto 10, St. 31)

Significantly, despite his strident anti-religion diatribe, Shelley shows prudent sensitivity in omitting any reference to Christ here. Similarly, in the lyrical drama *Hellas* (1822) about the Greek war of independence against the Turks, while depicting the imperial court of Sultan Mahmud receiving successive reports of the insurgents' victory, a vision of the Prophet is offered only once. The introductory chorus presents “the senate of the Gods”, attended by Satan, Christ and Mahomet (ll. 73-75), each pleading for or against the cause of Greece. While Christ chides Satan for his obduracy and pride, Mahomet exhorts the Evil one to aid the losing Muslims:

“Haste thou and fill the waning crescent  
With beams as keen as those which pierced the shadow  
Of Christian night rolled back upon the West,  
When the orient moon of Islam rode in triumph”.  
(ll. 169-172)

Shelley's anti-Mahomet innuendo depicts him as Christ's antagonist and Satan's supplicant. In a later instance, the chorus forebodes the doom of the crescent and lasting triumph of the Cross:

"The moon of Mahomet  
Arose, and it shall set:  
While blazoned as on Heaven's immortal noon  
The cross leads generations on". (ll. 221-224)

The icons symbolize not only faiths, they stand for two clashing civilizations.

Thomas Moore's two references to the Prophet in his oriental romance *Lalla Rookh* (1817) are entirely rhetorical in device, and, as usual, derogatory in nature. In the tale's first segment named *The Veiled Prophet of Khorasan* Mokanna's ('the veiled Prophet' of the story) amorous overture to Zelica is compared to the Prophet's alleged sensuousness and concoction of divine verses in support of his customarily prohibited marriage:

"And here Muhammad born for love and guile,  
Forgets the Koran in his Mary's smile,  
He beckons some kind angel from above  
With a new text to consecrate their love". (ll. 1143-46)

A hint of the alleged revelation of the Koran through "Mahomet's favourite pigeon" occurs in the second tale, titled *Paradise and the Peri* in a reference to Chamberlain Fadaldeen's copy of the Holy Book.

A more virulent and elaborate note forms the theme of a long, debasing poem in fluent Spenserian stanzas by an obscure soldier-poet, Hamilton M. Macleod, an officer in the Army of East India Company. *Muhammad* (1844) is a two-part poem of 52 and 54 stanzas respectively, depicting the Prophet's supposed sensuous

self aggrandizement in the case of his marital bond with Zeinab, widow of Zeid. But works of positive tributes in poetry and prose also characterize the age. Godfrey Higgins's *Apology for Muhammad* appeared in 1829, and Carlyle's epoch-making lecture *Prophet as a Hero* (on Muhammad) was delivered in 1840. John Davenport's appreciative study of the Prophet followed soon after. Some nineteenth century poems also reflect this positive note. Monckton Milnes's (Lord Houghton) *Palm Leaves* (1844) contained some pieces on inspiring episodes in the Prophet's life. Bayard Taylor (1825–1878) the American poet and travelogue – writer wrote a celebratory piece on the Prophet's nativity (1855). Edwin Arnold composed a whole series of poems on Islam – *Pearls of Faith*, or *Islam's Rosary* (1882). Each poem is captioned after different Divine Names in Arabic, and most of the poems expound the noble traits of the Apostle of Allah. J.G. Whittier, another American poet, also wrote a couple of poems, especially one on the requital of a debt by the Prophet on his death-bed.

Two influential biographies, claiming to be based on original sources, came out in the early second half of the nineteenth century – Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet* (1851) and Sir William Muir's volumes on Muhammad and his successors (1858). Recognizing the sincerity and political genius of the Prophet, these books recapitulate euphemistically the old allegations of ambitiousness and sensual proclivities. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in his well-argued scholarly rejoinder to Muir's skewed conclusions, questioned the reliability of his oriental sources, particularly Abul Fida on whom Muir depended heavily. But the milder tone of nineteenth-century critiques, particularly the positive trend of several poets of English as noted above, was a definite improvement on the former situation.

With the spread of Western education in the British colonies English progressively emerged as a popular medium of communication and creative expression on the Indian subcontinent.

Writing fiction and verse in English received phenomenal impetus, and the tradition has continued to flourish even in the post-colonial age in the subcontinent's partitioned wings. The English Muse's adaptation to Indian soil exuded occasionally devotional fragrance too involving Islamic aroma as well. A few writers wrote on Islamic themes and history.

Al-Haj Cassim Ali Jairazbhoy a Muslim scholar and political activist from the then Bombay Presidency wrote some fifty verses, captioned *The Call Divine*, as a part of his short prose treatise *The Man of Allah* on the Prophet's advent. Sir Nizam Jung (d. 1955), a trilingual author from the erstwhile Hyderabad State, and an Indo-Anglian poet of repute, wrote a number of poems on early Islamic history and on some notable events in the life of the 'Blessed Messenger'. Another Indo-Anglian poet and distinguished administrator from Bombay, *Adam U-Shaikh* (d. 2007) also contributed some encomiastic English verses on the "Minstrel of God". A doyen of Indian English poetry of the second half of the twentieth century, and mentor to a large contingent of young Indian poets, Krishna Srinivas (d. 2007) President of the World Poetry Society International, wrote a biographical poem, *Muhammad* in 1983. He admires the Apostle of Allah for "making Islam a real league of Nations" (Preface). Abdur Rauf Luther (d. 1988) a Pakistani poet wrote an epic giving a devout account of the rise of Islam and the Prophet. *The Epic of Faith* (1984) with a Sufistic flavour was the first long English poem on the subject, and includes several paraphrases in verse on the Prophet's titular names, some of them derived from the Koran. Another long biographical poem, *Muhammad – A Biography in Verse* (1991/2011) is the work of a trilingual academician – writer of verse and prose of different genres, Abdul Majeed Khan (b. 1935) of Karnataka. In this biography he quotes often from the Koran and *Hadith*. S.L. Peeran (b. 1950) a senior judicial officer and prolific poet

steeped in Sufistic lore has also written a long poem on Muhammad. *The Soul of the Desert* is yet another apostolic biography in verse by a budding English scholar-poet, Umer O. Thasneem (b. 1971) from Kerala.

Qualitatively rich and steeped in transparent devotion are the numerous poems and sonnets of the prolific and reputed American poet, Daniel Moore (b. 1940) who embraced Islam in 1970, and is a respected member of an old Sufic order. He writes now under the signature of Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore. One of the most distinguished English poets of India, particularly noted for her bold, psychological verse, Kamala Das – later known as Kamala (Das) Surayya after embracing Islam in 1999 – wrote a remarkable poem *Ya! Mohammed* devoutly recalling “the luminosity of [his] face” and faith. The poem appeared in her collection, captioned *Ya, Allah!*, translated by Kalim Ahmad. Pakistan’s outstanding academician – poet, Alamgir Hashmi (b. 1951) also wrote a poem, recapitulating Muhammad’s unrelenting and fearless preaching of the message of God in the desert. Syed Ameeruddin (b. 1940) also an academician from Madras and a distinguished Indian poet of English has also written a poem, *The Last Prophet*, eulogizing the divine messenger’s role in eradicating ‘adharma’ and paving the “Glorious path of peace”. These poems are included in the present anthology.

In the midst of lingering prejudices and mis-projections of history the twentieth century and after have taken a more balanced view of the Prophet’s personality and character. More positive English poems came into sight during the period, and fresh biographical studies have handled the subject judiciously with sensitivity and liberal understanding. Studies by Tor Andrea (translated into English in 1936), Martin Lings, Anne Marie Schimmel, Katherine Armstrong, Maxime Rodinson and Lesley Hazleton are some of the most notable examples. English translations of some classic studies in some oriental languages – e.g. *Seerat al-Nabi*’ by Shibli

Nomani/Suleiman Nadvi (Urdu) and M.H. Haykal (Arabic) – are also works of outstanding merit. Andrea, the Swedish scholar, offers some illuminating, insightful observations for the benefit of Western readers and critics of the Prophet. Regarding the genuineness of Muhammad's prophetic inspiration he remarks: "That Muhammad acted in good faith can hardly be disputed by anyone who knows the psychology of inspiration. That the message which he proclaimed did not come from himself, from his own ideas and opinions, is not only a tenet of his faith, but also an experience whose reality he never questioned".<sup>63</sup> Later, discussing the Prophet's sex-life, invariably castigated by his western critics, Andrea strikes a judicious note of caution: "Nevertheless, we cannot judge the Prophet of Islam according to our moral standards, but according to the standards which he himself recognized. And in order to understand his attitude on this matter we must before all things know the background, the moral conditions in Arabia at the time of his appearance, the basis on which his sexual ethics developed".<sup>64</sup> Likewise, traditionally the Western critics of the Prophet have invariably painted him as a ruthless war-monger, and the waning trend has been revived in the wake of the World Trade Centre tragedy (Sept. 11, 2001) by "members of the Christian Right in the United States and some sectors of the Western media". Karen Armstrong censures this mislaid charge as against the norms of civilization. She observes: "Some have gone so far as to claim that he was a terrorist. ... To cultivate an inaccurate prejudice damages the tolerance, liberality, and compassion that are supposed to characterize the Western Culture".<sup>65</sup> The twentieth century English poems have mostly shed off this complex.

Poetry, like its sister arts is the product of the author's perceptions and subconscious notions, affected in varying degree by legacy, environment and contemporary public mind. In the early ages the pejorative image of Muhammad was ubiquitous in the West. According to Dimmock, between 1450 and 1750, "almost

every one knew of Mahomet",<sup>66</sup> therefore it may not be out of place to cast a cursory glance at his presentation in other arts too. Apart from his allusions or portraiture in literature, Dimmock has made illustrative, detailed reference to the Prophet's treatment in woodcuts, embroidery, paintings and wall-hangings in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>67</sup> But in English drama Muhammad's visual presentation is traceable to the nineteenth century only. Earlier Voltaire had treated the subject negatively in France, Goethe planned an unexecuted play, and another German, Karoline Von Günderrode is also reported to have attempted a play and poem on Mahomet as a real hero.<sup>68</sup> In England Shelley's *Hellas* was the first play to envisage, as noticed above, a symbolic and transitory role for Mohomet as a supporter of the Turks against the Greeks. A later obscure play by Col. Lewis Pelly, *The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain* introduces him in person in four scenes in vol. I (Scenes I, III, IV & V). Scene V presents him on his death-bed with a prayer on his lips. In Scene VIII he appears in a dream foreboding the martyrdom of his grandsons – Hasan and Husain. The Prophet is depicted in the play as a humane, compassionate character, fond of his grandsons, even refusing the option offered by Gabrael to save his infant son, Ibrahim, at the cost of his grandsons (Sc. II). The second volume of the play deals exclusively with the latter's tragedy at Karbla. The plot of both the volumes is derived from history and the "oral traditions", collected while the author was on a diplomatic assignment in Persia. The present version was edited by Arthur N. Wollaston, translator of the Persian classic *Anwar-e-Subaili*.<sup>69</sup>

Two English plays exclusively centred on the person of the Prophet appeared in the twentieth century. *The Green Turban*,<sup>70</sup> a one-act play by an American writer, Isabel Anderson, was produced at Boston in 1937. The play highlights the miracles that occurred at the time of his birth, early boyhood and later, and Khadija's psychologically supportive role during his early prophethood is

treated in some detail. Significantly, the play by a woman writer, produced at the professional Women's Club, and the equal emphasis on Khadija's role affirming her husband's benevolent and socially responsive character, obliquely suggests the fair appreciation of the couple's characters by an enlightened section of the Bostonian society.

Internationally known as the founder of an innovative neo-Sufi Order, Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927) wrote a full-length English play on the Prophet – *Amin the Faithful Trustee*.<sup>71</sup> In four acts it encapsulates selectively the main events of his life, without calling him by his actual name in deference to the Muslims' traditional opposition to his visual or physical presentation in play or picture. The play opens with the future prophet's boyhood days in the desert, and shows his natural sobriety and abhorrence of idol-worship. Later, Khadija's support and exhortations sustain him in his spiritual and social crises. He starts preaching monotheism, and incurs the Meccans' stiff resistance and persecution. A small group of his followers is forced to flee to Yemen whose Chief grants them asylum (a tailored version of the Abyssinia episode). Finally, the Meccans surrender, and Amin forgives his former foes and tormentors. He delivers his final message to them and the Medinites who had supported him throughout. Inayat Khan presents a synoptic view of the Prophet's life and singular success. The essence of Islam is distilled here in plain but moving words, the characteristic Sufi vision, valourizing love above law.

### ***The Message (A Film on the Prophet)***

A film on the ideals, life and times of the Prophet was produced in 1976, titled *The Message*. The film was simultaneously released in English and Arabic, and depicted the trials and persecution of the

Prophet and his followers. They were compelled to leave for Medina where they found the soil less resistant, and the Message of Islam struck roots through repeated ordeals and battles. The film shows the Battles of Badr and Uhud. The battles are depicted from the view point of contending parties – Hamza, Bilal and Zaid representing the Islamic side, and Abu Sufian the Meccans' view. The Prophet himself takes part in the clashes. In deference to the sanctity of the tradition of not portraying the Prophet corporeally, his personal presence in the field is only suggested symbolically through music. The landscape has been constructed imaginatively to represent the real Bedouin and Meccan life. The English version turned out to be a great success. Taufiq al-Hakim, the writer of a voluminous drama in Arabic *Muhammad* (1936) was among the team of script writers, and its producer-director was Moustafa Aqqad who had undertaken the project as a sacred mission and a contribution to the efforts to abridge the gap between Islam and the West.<sup>72</sup>

The English poems on Muhammad, particularly of the twentieth century and after, also show developing awareness of the positive aspects of Islam and its founder. The anti-Muhammad views may not have disappeared completely,<sup>73</sup> but the creative imagination of modern English writers, on the whole, appears to be positively impressed by his life and character, which is apparently a small, but important, step towards inter-faith tolerance and understanding at least at the creative and intellectual levels, not an insignificant ray in the murky weather of recurring dissensions and conflicts among the nations and the internal groups in some countries of the world. Significantly, even in the wake of 2/11, and in the midst of mounting militancy, the anti-Islam indignation has been directed against the transgressors, not against its founder.

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## **William Langland (c. 1332–1386)**

Langland's life is shrouded in obscurity. He is said to have lived in London as a clergyman in minor orders. He supported Wycliffe and was a moral realist, keenly conscious of the evils and corruption in contemporary society, which he exposes in *Piers the Plowman*. The three part poem relates the spiritual progress of a Christian from ignorance to piety and grace through allegoric narrations of his dreams. He is bitterly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, and the clergy's deviation from the straight path. He introduces briefly Prophet Mohammad as an apostate Christian, misled by his ambition, and compares him sarcastically with the corrupt clergy of his own times. Langland's religious bigotry is self-evident in the extract.

*Piers the Plowman* has survived in three versions – Text A (1362) Text B (1377) and the posthumous Text C (1393). The following extract is culled from Text C (Bk. XVIII) as it is more expansive, and is reported to have been revised by the author himself. For the convenience of the lay reader, spellings and some words have been rendered in modern English, and the remaining odd words are clarified in the glossary at the end of the anthology.



## **Makamede**

A man called Makamede, for Messiah they him hold,  
And after his teachings they live, and by law of nature.<sup>160</sup>  
And when nature hath his course, and no contrary findeth,  
Then is law lost, and fidelity unknown.  
Beauty without goodness, blessed was it never,  
Nor disposition without courtesie, in country praised.  
Men find that Makamede, was a man christened,  
And a cardinal of court, a great clerk withal,  
And pursued to have been pope, prince of holy Church;  
And for he was lyke Lussheborg, I believe our lord him ignore,<sup>163</sup>  
Therefore went he into Surrey, and crated how he might  
Be master over all men, and in this manner wrought.  
He tamed a dove, day and night her fed;  
In either of his ears, privily he had  
Corn, that the dove eat, when he came in places.  
And in what place he preached, and the people taught,  
Then should the dove come to the clerk's ear,  
Meaning as after meat, thus Makamede her trained.<sup>176</sup>  
And when the dove came thus, then kneeled the people,  
For Makmede to men swore, 'it was a messenger of heaven,  
And verily god self, in such a dove's likeness  
Told him and taught him, how to teach the people'.<sup>180</sup>  
Thus Makamede in misbelief, man and woman brought,  
And in his lore they believe that, as well learned as ignorant.  
And in sooth our saviour suffered, such a false Christian  
Deceive so Saracens, surely me thinketh,  
Holy men, as I hope, through help of the holy ghost,  
Should convert them to Christ, and Christendom to take.<sup>186</sup>



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W.W. Skeat (ed.) *The Vision of William Concerning PIERS THE PLOWMAN*  
Together with Richard the Reedless Vol. I – (1924).

## **John Lydgate (c. 1370–1451)**

John Lydgate is generally regarded as a Chaucerian poet, and the author of most voluminous verse, mostly translations of earlier writers. He was a monk attached to the monastery of Bury St Edmonds. His longest works are *Troy Book* and the *Siege of Thebes*, translated from a French book in prose. *The Fall of Princes* (1431–8) was a second translation from a French version of Boccaccio. A section of Book IX gives a brief account of the rise and death of the Prophet of Islam characterized by disinformation and rampant prejudice against him prevalent in the medieval Christian world.



## **Of Machomet**

[Spellings of quaint words modernized]

After the death of Phocas, as I told,  
That Eraclius to reign first began,  
Came Machomet, in his time I hold  
A fals prophet and magician,  
And books old well rehearse can.  
Born in Arabia but of low kindred,  
And his life an idolator's indeed.<sup>56</sup>

And when that he grew to greater age,  
Deceivable in many sundry wises,  
With a camel used first carriage:  
Went to Egypt (to) fetle merchandies,<sup>60</sup>  
Fals and double, subtitle in his devises,  
To Jews and Christian sundry times sent  
Learned the old and New Testament.

As books old record in that part,  
This Machomet, this cursed false man,  
Out of Egypt fast gan him hie  
Toward a country called Corozon,  
With a lady hihte Cardigan, –  
Through his subtle false dalliance  
By craft he fill into her acquaintance.  
He wrought so by his enchantments  
And by false means of necromancy,<sup>72</sup>  
Her inclining toward his intents;  
For both he could right well flatter and lie.  
Said openly that he was Messie,  
Laws abiding upon his coming,  
As greatest prophet and their king.

Thus the people he brought in great error  
By his teaching and his false doctrine;  
He wax among them a great governor.  
The said lady he did also incline,  
As to a prophet which was divine  
Sent from above, as she did understand;  
For which she took him her husband.<sup>84</sup>

.....  
On his shoulders were oft times seen<sup>92</sup>  
When he to folks shewed his presence,  
Milk white doves, which that picked grain  
Out of his ears; affirming in sentence  
They came by grace of ghostly influence  
Him to visit, to show and specify  
He was the prophet that called was Messie.

A clerk of his called Sergius,  
Wrote his laws and the miracles three:<sup>113</sup>  
First of the doves, how they came to him thus,  
As hereto – form rehearsed was by me  
How milk and honey were tokens of great plenty,  
And of the bole, afforn by craft made tame,  
By false deceits to get him a name.

Of Arabians and Saracens, as I read,<sup>120</sup>  
And of Turkis made prince and governor,  
With Hismaelites and folk of Perse and Mede  
He gathered people, gan wax a warrior,  
Against Heraclius, the mighty emperor,  
And usurped to ride in the countries  
Got Alisaunder with many more cities.

Of the parties desirous to be king,  
Of that purpose when he was set aside,<sup>128</sup>

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammad*

To the people falsely dissimuling,  
Told he was sent prophets to provide  
For the countries, for to been their guide.  
And for he was reckless of courage,  
He made of Venus set up an image.<sup>133</sup>



Source: H. Bergen (ed.) *Fall of Princes*, 4 Vols. (1924)

## **S.T. Coleridge (1772–1834)**

Poet, critic and philosopher of Romanticism, Coleridge was the son of a vicar, and educated at Christ's Hospital School (London), and joined Jesus College (Cambridge), but left the college without taking a degree. He was attracted by the French Revolution, and read German philosophers. With Robert Southey he planned jointly a Pantisocracy, a scheme to set up a commune in New England, which did not fructify. He contributed poems to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) published jointly with W. Wordsworth. His masterpieces are *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Shakespearean Criticism* and *Biographia Literaria* are his enduring contributions to criticism and poetics.

The following fragment was first published in 1834. In a letter to Southey, dated 25 September, 1799, Coleridge dropped the hint about this piece, and wrote: "I shall go on with the *Mohammad*". *Complete Poetical Works* of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (ed. with notes by Ernest Hartley Coleridge in 2 Vols. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1912). See Vol. 1, pp. 329-30.



## **Mahomet**

Utter the song, O my soul! The flight and return of Mohammad,  
Prophet and priest, who scatter'd abroad both evil and blessing,  
Huge wasteful empires founded and hallowed slow persecution,  
Soul withering, but crash'd the blasphemous rites of the Pagan

And idolatrous Christians – For veiling the Gospel of Jesus,  
They, the best corrupting, had made it worse than the vilest.  
Wherefore Heaven decreed the enthusiast warrior of Mecca,  
Choosing good from iniquity rather than evil from goodness.  
Loud the tumult in Mecca surrounding the fane of the idol;  
Naked and prostrate the priesthood were laid – the people with  
mad shouts

Thundering now, and now with saddest Ululation  
Flew, as over the channel of rock-stone the ruinous river  
Shatters its waters abreast, and in mazy uproar bewilder'd,  
Rushes dividuous all – all rushing impetuous onward. (1799)



## **Robert Southey (1774–1843)**

Southey was a precocious reader since early days. He had a lonely childhood, and was admitted to the Westminster School from where he was expelled for founding a literary journal. Came early under the influence of historian Gibbon and the Romantic poets. Settled in the Lake Districts. Was a prodigious writer, and wrote plays, ballads and historical narratives. Translated the *Chronicle of the Cid* (1808) and composed *Roderick Random*. He wrote a famous Indian tale *The Curse of Kehama* and the Arabian tale *Thalaba the Destroyer*. In collaboration with Coleridge he planned a commune *Pantisocracy* in *New England*, which did not materialize.

He wrote biographies of Nelson and Cowper. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1813.

In the long piece culled below Southey narrates the event of the Prophet's flight (Hijra) from Mecca with Ali lying in his bed.



## **Mohammed**

### **A Fragment, Written in 1799**

Cloak'd in the garment of green, who lies on the bed of  
Mohamed,

Restless and full of fear, yet semblant of one that is sleeping;  
Every sound of the feet at his door he hears, and the breathing  
Low of inaudible words: he knows their meaning of murder,  
Knows what manner of men await his outgoing, and listens  
All their tread, and their whisp'ring, till even the play of his pulses  
Disturbs him, so deep his attention. The men of the Koreish  
Fix on the green-robed youth their eyes; impatiently watchful  
Wait they the steps of his rising, the coming of him whom they  
hated.

He rises and makes himself pure, and turning towards the Caaba,  
Loud he repeats his prayer: they hear, and in eagerness trembling,  
Grasp the hilts of their swords – their swords that are sworn to  
the slaughter,

But when the youth went forth, they saw, and, behold! It was Ali!  
Steady the hero's face: it was pale, for his life was a blessing;  
It was calm, for in death he look'd on to the crown of the martyr.  
Dark as they were of soul, and goaded by rage disappointed,  
They shed not the blood of the youth, but remember'd their  
chieftain his father,

Abu Taleb the good, and respected the virtue of friendship.  
Baffled, and full of wrath, through Mecca they scatter the tidings:  
"He has fled, has discover'd our plans, has eluded our vengeance."  
"Saw ye the steps of his flight? Where lurks he, the lying blasphemer?"  
"Now to the chase, to the chase; seize now the bow and the quiver,  
"Now with the sword and the spear, ye stubborn of Mecca! Pursue  
him;

“Seek him now to the north and the south, to the sunset and sunrise,  
“Follow, follow the chosen one’s flight!” They rush from the city:  
Over the plain they pursue him, pursue him with cries and with  
curses —

Sounds that rung over the plain, and rung in the echoing mountains;  
And Mecca received in her streets the din of their clamorous uproar.  
But to the throne of God; and tears of the heart overflowing  
Interceded for him whom they loved and believed his apostle.

“Where is the blasphemer fled? The lying disturber of Mecca?  
 “Has he journey’d to Tayef? Under the shield of his uncle  
 “Lurks he for safety there or to Yathreb, the credulous city?  
 “Or seeks he the Ethiop’s court, where the earlier runaways shelter?”

Lashing their steeds, they pursue; to the east and the dwelling of  
Abbas

Hasten the thirsty for blood; to the north they hurry, to Yathreb;  
Some to the shore of the sea, lest haply a bark might await him,  
And the waves should become his protectors: impetuously rushing,  
Drive they in fury along; beneath the hoofs of their horses  
Sparkles the rock of the valley, and rises the dust of the desert.

Others the while, more cool in wrath, and thoughtful in fury,  
Over the town search sedulous: they in the Hashemites' dwellings  
Seek for the man proscribed; in the dwellings of Hamza and Omar,  
Ali, Abubeker, and Saad, and Abu Obeidah;

All whom the prophet loved, who believed in the son of Abdallah.  
 Every house they search in the populous city, whose threshold  
 Ever his feet had trod: thus vainly through Mecca they seek him;  
 Then, unassuaged of hate, of rancour and wrath unabated,  
 They to the mountains turn, to seek their dens and retirings

If from the death he lurks: they enter the cavern of Hira,  
Place of his fasting and prayer; the cavern of Hira is lonely.

Not in the depth of the cave, and not in the mountain retirings,  
Not in their hollows and glens, can they track the steps of his  
going.

So through the day they sought; and still, when the sun was  
descending,

They were among the hills: then faint, disappointed, and weary,  
Turning their faces homeward, they journey'd slowly and sullen  
Down their rough mountain path; but often paused, and around  
them

Linger'd with prowling eyes; a little wide of their pathway,  
Thus as they paused, they saw in the side of the side of the stony  
mountain

A cave-mouth, narrow and high: the hill had the hue of the  
evening

Rich on its rugged sides, and the chasm was distinct in its  
blackness,

Thither turning, they sped; and one who forwent his companions  
Came to the cavern's mouth: disturb'd by the noise of his  
footsteps,

From her nest, in the side of the chasm, a pigeon affrighted  
Fled. The advancing pursuers heard the whirr of her pinions,  
And he who was first exclaim'd, "There is none in the hole of the  
mountain;

"For lo! A pigeon fled from her nest at the sound of my coming,  
"And the spider hath spread his network over the entrance".  
Then from the cave he turn'd. Was thy spirit shaken, Mohammed,  
When in the depth of the rock thou heardest the voice of the  
Koreish?

He who was with thee trembled; the sweat on his forehead was  
chilly,

And his eyes in alarm were turn'd towards thee in the darkness,  
Silent they sat in the rock; nor moved they, nor breathed they; but  
listen'd

Long to the tread of the feet, that fainter and fainter sounding,  
Died in the distance now: yet still they were silent, and listen'd.

Abu Beker first, as his fear gave faith to the echo,  
Fresh in his sense alarm'd – "Hark! Hark! I hear them returning:  
"They are many, and we but two!" he whisper'd in terror.  
"There's a third!" aloud replied the son of Abdullah –  
"God!"

So the night came on, and they in the place of their refuge  
Silently sat. And now in hope they listen'd, awaiting  
Sound of approaching feet – of trusted friend or disciple,  
Bringing them food and tidings, now that the darkness had  
settled.

Slow pass the expectant hours: nearer the mouth of the cavern  
Eagerly now they drew. The sound of the wind that was passing  
Took from their hope its tone; and now in its distant murmurs  
They heard the tread of feet; and now despairingly argued  
Danger was yet abroad, and a step was heard – distinctly they  
heard it:

Heavier it comes, – and now in the rock – and a voice – it is Ali.  
He in the cave laid down the water skin that he carried,  
And the figs wrapt under his robe: then told he his tidings.  
Low was his voice, for he spake in fear: "The peril is pressing,  
"Prophet of God, I saw thy foes return in the twilight:  
"Sullen they came from their toil, and talk'd of the search on the  
"The Idolators joy in thy flight, and grieve at thy safety:  
"God shall remember their joy, and that grief, in the day of his  
judgement.

"They shall feel in their evil load! A price is appointed  
"His who shall shed thy blood: but keep thou close in the  
mountain:

"God will confound their plots"  
He paused so, suddenly checking

Words on their way, as one who tells but half of his errand,  
Loath to utter the worse reminder, that yet must be utter'd.  
Sure if Mohammed had seen his eye, he had read in its trouble  
Tidings of evil to come. At length to the son of Abdallah,  
Telling his tale of woe, spake Ali the first of believers:  
"Prophet, there is grief in thy dwelling: Cadijah in sickness  
"Lies on her bed of pain: for death she is stricken, I fear me".  
Mohammed heard; and he bow'd his head, and groan'd for his  
exile.

[Additional lines in V. 5, p. 478, of *Poetical Work* ed. by Lynda  
Pratt/London Pickering and Chatto, 2004]

"Tell her", at length he cried, "to trust in the Lord her creator,  
"In me faithful on earth, and the gates of Paradise open  
"Bid her rejoice in her God, – but it is not long to the morning  
"Perhaps unseen can enter the city and bless her  
"Ere she departs".

"Not so! It were death", said Ali "to venture  
"Prophet of God remain! Thy duty is self-preservation  
"Remember thy lofty task!"



## **Hamilton M. Macleod**

Macleod was a minor soldier-poet of the Nineteenth century. He served as a Lieutenant in the 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment in the Army of the East India Company. *Mohammed and Other Poems* was published from Madras, and in the preface, dated February 1, 1844, the author refers to his poems as "these trifles". Based on Taylor's tendentious *History of Mohammedanism*, the poem on Mohammed is in two parts of 52 and 54 Spenserian stanzas respectively, and focuses incriminatingly on the Prophet's marriage with Zeinab, the widow of Zeid (his freed bondsman and adopted son).

In a prefatory note, the poet adds: "For euphony's sake I have substituted the name of Ali for that of Zeid". His two other long poems were *Remorse*, a Tale of modern times, and *Llewelyn*, a romantic tale of Cambria.



## **Mohammed**

### **Part – I**

#### **(I)**

Great Prophet! thou, whose kindling spirit urged  
By high ambition, long in secret teems  
With visioned hopes, until thyself emerged  
From Hira's mount, when lo: thy soul redeems  
Its passive state, and rife with daring schemes  
Thou stood'st revealed, Arabia's self-raised lord;  
Sudden and brilliant as the meteor gleams,  
Thine advent burst upon her tribes, who poured  
Deep homage at thy shrine, their chosen, blast, adored!

#### **(II)**

The "Flight" had passed, and through Medina's streets  
Swept onwards to her gates the living crowd,  
Where he approached, whom all that city greets  
As guest and prince with plaudits long and loud:  
While aged heads were there, who mutely bowed  
In reverence greater than the tongue could give;  
And gallant youths with stern devotion vowed  
Eternal faith to him they now receive,  
Their future leader, Mecca's foe and fugitive.

#### **(III)**

Woe to thee Mecca! For the hate was deep  
That lone exile breathed against thy walls;  
Thou heed'st it not, doomed city! For thy sleep  
Is still secure, until the blow that falls  
To crush, arouse thee – then thy foe recalls

His curse, for then thy hostile soil is red  
With patriot blood, and henceforth he installs  
Himself the monarch of the realms he fled,  
His wish fulfilled, his vengeance buried with the dead.

(IV)

Beneath Medina's loftiest portal-arch  
Slowly the sacred pageant swept along;  
Mohammed foremost, and behind him march  
His Moslem train, while thundering from the gong  
Peals the glad music of triumphal song:  
How bright the budding hopes that then engage  
The exile's thoughts! For dreams of glory throng  
Upon his daring soul, and half presage  
Himself the future Prophet of a wondering age.

(V)

Beside him rode another young in years,  
The faithful Ali – Ali! thou hast won  
Full well the fond affection that endears  
Thy lord to thee, for, as a cherished son  
He loved the Meccan youth, who had begun  
Life's first career beneath the Prophet's dome  
Together would they live as they had done;  
Unchanged in peril as in peace to roam  
O'er foreign lands, and seek what their's denied – a home.

(VI)

They loved as brothers, but with Ali's love  
Awe and idolatory of him were blent;  
He deemed his lord commissioned from above;  
The messenger of Heaven, who came intent

On holiest purposes; the instrument  
Of Alla's high designs, and only trod  
This earth for man's reform – but first was sent  
Favoured Arabia! To thy pagan sod  
The true Messiah, the representative of God!

(VII)

This was his creed, and if a doubtful cloud  
O'erhung the mind it shuddered to unfold  
The deep, the awful mysteries that enshroud  
The faith himself declared of heavenly mould:  
Let the pure Prophet bid, and he had sold  
His time on earth for that reward to come;  
Thrice welcome such a death! for he would hold  
This as the pledge of future joys – the sum  
Of all that can ensure the crown of martyrdom.

(VIII)

Mohammed! here first rose the prescient star  
Of dawning glory, when thy presence graced  
Medina's walls, for thronging from afar  
To pay a vassal's devoir thousands haste;  
Warrior and sage of every grade and caste  
Are seen to mingle at the threshold-door;  
Ev'n lawless chiefs from Yemen's arid waste,  
Whose barbarous souls had never felt before  
A ruler's sway, own thine, the Prophet they adore!

(IX)

A year blazed Phoebus on the bare campaign  
Without that city's gates-when next it shone,  
'Twas o'er a peopled, thickly studded plain

Of troop, and camp, and war's caparison:  
Streaming aloft, the zephyrs played upon  
The banner of the Faith which proudly curled,  
And flapping its wing, impatient to be gone  
Where fate decreed it soon to flaunt unfurled  
O'er the tall citadels of half the Eastern world.

(X)

Night came, and slumber crept upon that host,  
Save one, whose restless bosom bore, uncrushed,  
The many cares that held it all engrossed;  
He seldom slept, or if his thoughts were hushed  
To peace awhile, then phantom visions rushed  
Like welcome streams upon his thirsty soul:  
These were the inebriate draughts that nightly flashed  
That fever of his hopes which spurned control,  
And loathing part, resolved to gain mighty whole.



## **Mohammed**

### **Part – II**

#### **(I)**

There's mourning in Medina's gorgeous halls,  
Though rich with many spoils, and conquest crowned,  
Her army rests within those sacred walls;  
Aye! there is deepest mourning, though the sound  
Of drum and merrier Cymbol, bursting round,  
Proclaims the news of victory lately won  
By his brave troops, the Prophet most renowned!  
Islam bewails its common loss – as one  
Mourn all-Mohammed mourns his lost adopted son;

#### **(II)**

Who fought on Muta's plain, and there redeemed  
By death his vow: let eastern record tell,  
How Ali, strung with power supernal, seemed  
To wreak, that day, on foe and infidel  
The sum of Alla's wrath, as numbers fell,  
Like trees before the electric lightning's blaze;  
By these supposed of heaven, by those of hell,  
Awestruck the wavering host beholds and prays  
Deliverance from a foe that earth could never raise.

#### **(III)**

We mortals mourn when death's stern fiats sever  
Worth, virtues from the world, for they awake  
The thoughts that they are lost to us for ever;  
A selfish passion, when our souls partake  
Of sorrow, not for their, but our own, sake!

But this is only portion of that leaven  
Implanted in our hearts, that serves to make  
Our nature human, and without which, even  
Angels would prove less worthy occupants of heaven;

(IV)

Implanted in us, 'till the time of love  
Approach, when all creation feels the pains  
Of second birth, and glory from above  
Descends in light on waking earth's domains:  
Chaos revives, and man's Messiah reigns,  
Announcing then millenium's days begin;  
And great Jehovah's voice is heard in strains,  
"Let souls be pure", and all is pure within  
As their's once were, the parents of ourselves and sin.

(V)

And so they mourn his willing sacrifice,  
Whom all (Mohammed most) had honoured, loved;  
Islam! in him thy worthiest champion dies,  
Preferring death to living self-reproved;  
He knew the Prophet's wish, and it behoved  
A servant of the faith (he thought) to choose  
Ev'n thus; and never nobler impulse moved  
The mind, than that which prompts it to refuse  
Its own free will, to yield another's fancied dues.



## **Zeinab's Grief**

### **(XLII)**

This was the spirit that in Zeinab's breast  
Joyed in the work, that gave it power to wring  
A soul with thoughts too dark to be expressed:  
Her ear recalls the fearful threatening –  
Her bleeding heart still rankles with the sting,  
Inflicted by the hand she deemed accurst;  
For every word he spoke, had touched a spring,  
That welling to a torrent, as it burst,  
Shall find its victims there, and Prophet! thee the first.

### **(XLIII)**

Who that saw thee, loveliest! ere thou parted  
With joys as bright as mortals seldom feel,  
Could look upon thee now, lone, broken-hearted,  
Assuming on thy frozen brow the seal  
Of sorrows such as time can ne'er repeal,  
And doubt your woman's hearts, in truth, are riven,  
And crushed by blows that do but bruise  
But pure one! all *thy* errors unforgiven,  
Would scarce suffice to drive an Angel's soul from Heaven.

### **(XLIV)**

The hour is nigh, for lo! the silver queen,  
Herself above, her spirit reigning here,  
Thus mingles earth and heaven, a glorious scene!  
'Twas such a night, when first, the exiled seer  
Beheld the image, whom his thoughts revere

As their sole idol thenceforth, when his eye  
Let fall at beauty's shrine the earliest tear  
Over hopes that only lived for one whose sigh  
Tells how the fruit of her's was wreck and misery.

(XLV)

The hour is nigh, yet on that warning orb  
Her look is fixed with calm, unshrinking gaze;  
So calm, the mind within seemed to absorb  
The peace that was concentrated in her says –  
A peace so still, profound, itself betrays,  
'Tis not the peace, which passive souls possess;  
And on her brow sat that resolve, which says  
That "man has done his worst, and I redress  
Those wrongs, which to avenge and die is happiness".



## Richard Monckton Milnes (1809–1885)

He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he made friends with some eminent Victorian writers – Tennyson, A.H. Hallam and W.M. Thackeray. His other friends were literary celebrities like Bowring, Patmore, Swinbure and Landor. In 1837 he became M.P. and was later created Baron Houghton. He wrote two volumes of poetry and turned out to be a great connoisseur of literature. He wrote sensitively on the Life and Letters of John Keats. He also evaluated anew Blake and Peacock and did much to popularize the three of them.

The following two poems are culled from the *Palm Leaves*, 1844, and show his appreciation of the Prophet's cool and calm in extreme danger, and his impeccable honesty even as they looked to a non-believer. Milnes wrote frankly about his honest impression in a footnote to the latter poem: "I have not attempted in these poems to write as a Mohammedan or Eastern. ... .. My object has been as far as possible to fuse together my own natural and national modes of thought and those of the oriental province of the human kind."

The second poem deals with the episode of the blind man in the Prophet's assembly, alluded to in Qu'ran ch. 80:1-7.



## **Mohammed and the Assassin**

“Leave me, my followers, leave me;  
The best-loved voices grieve me  
When falls the weary day:  
My heart to God is yearning,  
My soul to God returning:  
Leave me alone to pray.”

So had the Prophet spoken:  
The silence was unbroken,  
While on a tree close by  
He hung his arms victorious,  
And raised his forehead glorious  
As glows the western sky.

Fast as the sun descended,  
Further the Prophet wended  
His course behind the hill;  
Where, at his motives prying,  
An Arab foe was lying,  
Hid by a sand-heap, still.

One of a hateful tribe,  
Treating with scorn and gibe  
God and the Prophet's name:  
Creatures of evil lust,  
Base as the desert dust,  
Proud of their very shame!

With upraised sword behind him,  
Burning to slay or bind him,  
Stealthy the traitor trod;  
He cried, “At last I have thee!

Whom has thou now to save thee?"  
"God", said the Prophet, "God"!

Guardian of Allah's choice,  
Gabriel had heard that voice –  
Had seen the felon's brand;  
Swift from his hand he tore it,  
Swift as an arrow bore it  
Into the Prophet's hand.

O vain design, and senseless,  
To find the man defenceless  
Whom God loves like a son!  
He cried, "Who now shall save thee?"  
Which of the friends of God gave thee?"  
"None", said the Arab, "none!"

"Yes", said the Prophet, "One –  
Evil the deed now done –  
Still thou hast found a friend:  
Only believe and bow  
To Him who has saved thee now,  
Whose mercy knows no end".



## **Mohammed and the Blind Abdullah**

The blind Abdullah sought the tent  
Where mid the eager listening crowd,  
Mohammed gave his wisdom vent,  
And, entering fast, he cried aloud –  
“O father, full of love and ruth!  
My soul and body both are blind;  
Pour on me then some rays of truth  
From thine illuminated mind”.

Perchance the Prophet heard him not  
Or busied well, seemed not to hear,  
Or, interrupted, then forgot  
How all mankind to God are dear:  
Disputing with the great and strong,  
He frowned in momentary pride,  
While through the jeering outer throng  
Th’ unnoticed suppliant crept aside.

But in the calm of the midnight,  
The Voice that seldom kept aloof  
From his blest pillow spoke the right,  
And uttered words of stern reproof: –  
“How dost thou know that poor man’s soul  
Did not on thy regard depend?  
The rich and proud thy moods control; –  
I meant thee for the mourner’s friend”.  
Deep in the Prophet’s contrite heart  
The holy reprimand remained,  
And blind Abdullah for his part  
Kindness and reverence thence obtained:  
Twice, after years of sacred strife,

Within Medeenah's walls he ruled,  
The man through whom Mohammad's life  
Into its perfect grace was schooled.

And, from the warning of that night,  
No one, however, humble, past  
Without salute the Prophet's sight,  
Or felt his hand not held the last:  
And every one was free to hear  
His high discourse, and in his breast  
Unburden theirs without a fear  
Of troubling his majestic rest.

Thus too, when a Muslim meets,  
Though new the face and strange the road,  
His "Peace be on you" sweetly greets  
The ear, and lightens many a head:  
Proclaiming that in Allah's plan  
True men of every rank and race  
Form but one family of man,  
One Paradise their resting place.



---

The poem refers to 'Abdullah Ibn-e-Maktoom', Koran, ch. 30.

## **Bayard Taylor (1825–1878)**

Bayard Taylor (1825–1878) wore many hats as a writer. He was diplomat, translator, lecturer, novelist, playwright, poet and historian by turns and even simultaneously. Coming of Quaker background, he wandered across Europe for two years and relished the itinerary. He published *Views of a Footman* (1846) and *Oriental Travels* in 1854. While in the East, he developed a genuine love for oriental rites and Arabic culture. *Poems of the Orient*, contains several pieces on oriental themes. 'The Bedoiun Song' and a poem each on Ali and Khalil are notable compositions. He translated *Faust* (1870–71), and served as Professor of German literature at the Cornell University.



## **The Birth of the Prophet**

### **(I)**

THRICE three moons had waxed in heaven, thrice three moons  
had waned away,  
Since Abdullah, faint and thirsty, on the Desert's bosom lay  
In the fiery lap of Summer, the meridian of the day;

### **(II)**

Since from out the sand upgushing, loo! a sudden fountain leapt  
Sweet as musk and clear as amber, to his parching lips it crept.  
When he drank it straightway vanished, but his blood its virtue  
kept.

### **(III)**

Ere the morn his forehead's luster, signet of the Prophet's line,  
To the beauty of Amina had transferred its flame divine:  
Of the germ within her sleeping, such the consecrated sign.

### **(IV)**

And with every moon that faded waxed the splendor more and  
more,  
Till Amina's beauty lightened through the matron veil she wore,  
And the tent was filled with glory, and of Heaven it seemed the  
door.

### **(V)**

When her quickened womb its burden had matured,  
and Life began

Struggling in its living prison, through the wide creation ran  
Premonitions of the coming of a God-appointed man.

(VI)

For the oracles of Nature recognize a Prophet's birth  
Blossom of the tardy ages, crowning type of human worth  
And by miracles and wonders he is welcomed to the Earth.

(VII)

Then the stars in heaven grew brighter, stooping down ward from  
their zones;  
Wheeling round the towers of Mecca, sang the moon in silver  
tones,  
And the Kaaba's grisly idols trembled on their granite thrones.

(VIII)

Mighty arcs of rainbow splendor, pillared shafts of purple fire,  
Split the sky and spanned the darkness, and with many a golden  
spire,  
Beacon-like, from all the mountains streamed the lambent  
meteors higher.

(IX)

But when first the breath of being to the sacred infant came,  
Paled the pomp of airy lustre, and the stars grew dim with shame,  
For the glory of his countenance outshone their feebler flame.

(X)

Over Nedjid's sands it lightened, unto Oman's coral deep,  
Startling all the gorgeous regions of the Orient from sleep,  
Till, a sun on night new-risen, it illumed the Indian steep.

(XI)

They who dwelt in Mecca's borders saw the distant realms appear  
All around the vast horizon, shining marvellous and clear,  
From the gardens of Damascus unto those of Bendomeer.

(XII)

From the colonnades of Tadmor to the hills of Hadramaut,  
Ancient Araby was lighted, and her sands the splendor caught,  
Till the magic sweep of vision overtook the track of Thought.

(XIII)

Such on Earth the wondrous glory, but beyond the sevenfold skies  
God his mansions filled with gladness, and the seraphs saw arise  
Palaces of pearl and ruby from the founts of Paradise.

(XIV)

As the surge of heavenly anthems shook the solemn midnight air,  
From the shrines of false religions came a wailing of despair,  
And the fires on Pagan altars were extinguished every where.

(XV)

Mid the sounds of salutation, mid the splendor and the balm,  
Knelt the sacred child, proclaiming, with a brow of heavenly calm:  
"God is God; there is none other; I his chosen Prophet am!"



---

*(from Poems of the Orient)*

## **Sir Edwin Arnold (1832–1904)**

Arnold was educated at Oxford where he won the Newdigate Prize for merit of his verse compositions. He served as Principal of the Poona College (India) from 1856 to 1861. Later he joined the *Daily Telegraph* and rose to be its editor in 1871. He seems to have been fairly well-acquainted with the Q'ran and books of *Hadith*. He wrote the life of Buddha as *The Light of Asia* derived from Sanskrit sources. He also did the life of Jesus Christ in verse, and composed poems on the Holy Names of Allah, alluding elaborately to some corresponding episodes in the Prophet's life. The following poems belong to this type.



## **Muhammad's Journey to Heaven**

Al-Fati'h! praise the "Opener!" and recite  
The marvels of that "Journey of the night".<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord Muhammad lay upon the hill  
Safa, whereby the holy city stands,  
Asleep, wrapped in a robe of camel's wool  
Dark was the night – that Night of grace – and still;  
When all the seven spheres, by God's commands,  
Opened unto him, splendid and wonderful!

For Gabriel, softly lighting, touched his side,  
Saying, "Rise, thou enwrapped one! come and see  
The things which be beyond. Lo! I have bought  
Borak, the horse of swiftmess; mount and ride!"  
Milk – white that steed was, with embroidery  
Of pearls and emeralds in his long hair wrought.

Hooved like a mule he was, with a man's face;  
His eyes gleamed from his forelock, each a star  
Of lucent hyacinth; the saddle cloth  
Was woven gold, which priceless work did grace:  
The lightning goeth not so fast or far  
As those broad pinions which he fluttered forth.

One heel he smote on Safa, and one heel  
On Sinai – where the dint is to this day.  
Next at Jerusalem he neighed. Our Lord,  
Descending with th' Archangel three, did kneel  
Making the midnight prayer; afterwards they  
Tethered him to the Temple by a cord.

---

*Cf.* Koran, XVII, Chapter "Of the Night Journey".

"Ascend", spake Gabriel; and behold! There fell  
Out of the sky a ladder bright and great,  
Whereby, with easy steps on radiant stairs,  
They mounted – past our earth and heaven and hell –  
To the first sphere, where Adam kept the gate,  
Which was of vaporous gold and silvery squares.

Here thronged the lesser Angels: some took charge  
To fill the clouds with rain and speed them round,  
And some to tend live creatures; for what's born  
Hath guardians there in its own shape: a large  
Beauteous white cock crowed matins, at the sound  
Cocks in a thousand planets hailed the morn.

Unto the second sphere by that white slope  
Ascended they, whereof Noah held the key;  
And twofold was the throng of Angels here;  
But all so dazzling glowed its fretted cope  
Burning with beams, Muhammad could not see  
What manner of celestial folk were there.

The third sphere lay a thousand years beyond  
If thou shouldst journey as the sun-ray doth,  
But in one Fatihah clomb they thitherward.

David and Solomon in union fond  
Ruled at the entrance, keeping Sabboth  
Of ceaseless joy. The void was paven hard.

With paven work of rubies – if there be  
Jewels on earth to liken unto them  
Which had such colour as no goldsmith knows  
And here a vast Archangel they did see,  
"Faithful of God" his name, whose diadem  
Was set with peopled stars; where from arose

Lauds to the glory of God, filling the blue  
With lovely music, as rose-gardens fill  
A land of essences; and young stars, shaking  
Tresses of lovely light, gathered and grew  
Under his mighty plumes, departing still  
Like ships with crews and treasure, voyage-making.

So came they to the fourth sphere, where there sate  
Enoch, who never tasted death; and there  
Behind its portal awful Azrael writes;  
The shadow of its brows compassionate  
Made right across all worlds, our Lord felt fear,  
Marking the stern eyes and the hand which smites.

For always on a scroll he sets the names  
Of new-born beings, and from off the scroll  
He blotteth who must die, and holy tears  
Roll down his cheeks, recording all our shames  
And sins and penalties, while of each soul  
Monker and Nakir reckon the arrears.

Next at the fifth sphere's entry, they were' ware  
Of a door built in sapphire, having graven  
Letters of flashing fire, the faith unfolding,  
"There is no God save God". Aaron sate there  
Guarding the "region of the wrath of Heaven";  
And Israfil behind, his trumpet holding.

His trumpet holding – which shall wake the dead  
And slay the living – all his cheek puffed out,  
Bursting to blow; for none knows Allah's time,  
Nor when the word of judgment shall be said:  
And darts, and chains of flame, lay all around,  
Terrible tortures for th' ungodly's crime.

When to the sixth sphere passed they, Moses sped  
Its bars of Chrysoprase, and kissed our Lord,  
And spake full sweet, "Prophet of Allah! Thou  
More souls of Ismael's tribes to truth hast led,  
Than I of Isaah's". Here the crystal sword  
Of Michael gave the light they journeyed through.

But at the seventh sphere that light which shone  
Hath not an earthly name, nor any voice  
Can tell its splendour, nay, nor any ear  
Learn, if it listened, only he alone  
Who saw it, knows how there th' elect rejoice,  
Isa, and Ibrahim, and the souls most dear.

And he, the glorious regent of that sphere,  
Had seventy thousand heads; and every head  
As many countenances; and each face  
As many mouths; and in each mouth there were  
Tongues seventy thousand, whereof each tongue said,  
Ever and Ever, "Praise to Allah! Praise!"  
Here at the bound is fixed that lotus-tree  
Sedra, which none among the Angels pass;  
And not great Gabriel's self might farther wend:  
Yet led by presences too bright to see,  
Too high to name, on paths like purple glass  
Our Lord Muhammad journeyed to the end.

Alone! alone! through hosts of Cherubin  
Crowding the infinite void with whispering vans,  
From splendour unto splendour still be sped;  
Across the "Lake of Gloom" they ferried him,  
And then the "Sea of Glory": mortal man's  
Heart cannot hold the wonders witnessed.

So to the "Region of the Veils" he came,  
Which shut all times off from eternity,  
The bars of being where thought cannot reach:  
Ten thousand are they, walls of flame  
Lambent with loveliness and mystery,  
Ramparts of utmost heaven, having no breach.

Then he saw God! Our Prophet saw the Throne!  
O Allah! Let these weak words be forgiven!  
Thou, the Supreme, "the opener", spake at last;  
The throne! The Throne! he saw; – our Lord alone!  
Saw it and heard! But the verse falls from heaven  
Like a poised eagle, whom the lightnings blast.

And Gabriel waiting by the tree he found;  
And Borak, tethered to the Temple porch;  
He loosed the horse, and twixt its wings ascended  
One hoof it smote on Zion's hallowed ground,  
One upon Sinai; and the day-stair's torch  
Was not yet fading when the journey ended.



---

Al-Fatih! "Opener"! we say  
Thy name, and worship Thee always.  
*Pearls of the Faith or Islam's Rosary*, Being the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of Allah  
(Asma-el-'Husna).

## **Muhammad in the Cemetery**

Al-Khabir! Thou Who "aware" of all,  
By this name also for Thy grace we call.

One morning in Medina walked our Lord  
Among the tombs; glad was the dawn, and broad  
On headstones and on footstones sunshine lay;  
Earth seemed so fair, twas hard to be away.  
"O people of the graves!" Muhammad said,  
"Peace be with you! Your caravan of dead  
Hath passed the defile, and we living ones  
Forget what men ye were, of whom the sons,  
And what your merchandise and where ye went;  
But Allah knows these things! Be ye content  
Since Allah is 'aware'. Ah! God forgive  
Those that are dead, and us who briefly "live".

Yea! Pardon Lord, since Thou dost know  
To-morrow, now and long ago.



## **The Prophet's Oath**

Earth knows, heaven shows; the holy Scriptures say,  
How righteous and "unerring" is Thy way.

"We sent it down upon the 'Night of Power';  
The Book which 'doth declare'  
In all the year that night is best: one hour  
Thereof in praise and prayer,  
"Is worth a thousand days of joy; for then  
The Angels bear commands,  
Bringing the will of Ar-Raschid to men;  
Descending on all lands.

"Peace ruleth till the rising of that dawn,  
While Allah doth ordain  
How many souls those twelve months shall be born,  
How many shall attain  
"His mercy, for the books are brought of these,  
And each account is cast;  
And Allah maketh the 'allowances',  
Accepting souls at last".

Thus spoke our Lord, and Ayesha replied  
"O Prophet! are there none  
Accepted, save by mercy?" "None"! he cried  
"By God! I say not one!"  
"Not thou! – not even thou! thou not to go,  
Unquestioned, into heaven,  
Who walked with Allah's angels, and below  
Taught us the message given?"  
He drew his cloth across his bended face,  
And thrice he spake to her:

"Except God's mercy cover me with grace,  
I shall not enter there!"

O Ar-Raschid! and if not he,  
Increase to us Thy clemency.



- 
1. Koran-Chapter 97, 'Of Power'
  2. Cf. the Mishkat-el Masabih

## **John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)**

An American poet of Quaker parentage, he was an ardent Abolitionist, and wrote some moving anti-slavery poems. A co-founder of the *Atlantic Monthly* (f. 1857), he wrote sonnets, verse narratives on rural and political themes. The poem reproduced below shows his genuine admiration for the Prophet's intrinsic probity.



## **Requital**

As Islam's Prophet, when his last day drew  
Nigh to its close, besought all men to say  
Whom he had wronged, to whom he then should pay  
A debt forgotten, or for pardon sue,  
And, through the silence of his weeping friends,  
A strange voice cried: "Thou owest me a debt",  
"Allah be praised!" he answered. "Even yet  
He gives me power to make thee amends.  
O friend! I thank thee for thy timely word."  
So runs the tale. Its lesson all may heed,  
For all have sinned in thought, or word, or deed,  
Or, like the Prophet, through neglect have erred.  
All need forgiveness, all have debts to pay  
Ere the night cometh, while it still is day.



## **Cassamally Jairazbhoy**

Jairazbhoy was an illustrious public figure of the former Bombay presidency during the early decades of the twentieth century. He was the Justice of Peace, and a Vice-President of the Muslim League in 1914-15 of the Presidency. He wrote a biography of the Prophet in prose in the 1930s, with a brief section in verse which is reproduced below. The biography was titled *Man of Allah*.

His collection of Essays were published as *War Literature*, vol. 1 in 1916. Some of the more famous, though occasionally, controversial, were 'The Righteous Cause of the Allies'; 'Essays on Turkey's War Policy'; 'Indian Moslems'; 'Moslem Education'; 'Moslem League Controversy'; and 'Koja Patriotism'.



## **The Call Divine**

Striking traces in him did vie,  
Noble, chaste, and truthful high,  
Was the Prophet's youthful life,  
Midst that land of hopeless strife;

Doubtless stainless, crystal clean,  
Was that beaming, beauteous mien;  
And Bahira spoke the truth,  
Of the greatness of the youth.

Deeply moved by Mecca's ways,  
Immorality so base,  
Oft in contemplative mood  
He bewildered, baffled stood,

Seeking solemn loneliness,  
And not worldly happiness,  
In that wicked Arab land,  
Lotus-like he pure did stand.

And Khadija, equal pure,  
Noble, good, and rich, was sure  
Worthy, fitting mate to him,  
In that time of darkness dim,

Of perplexing agony,  
She, a heaven – sent harmony,  
Added glow and glory more,  
Gladly all those burdens bore.

Now more contemplative still,  
Grew that soul of stronger will,

And Khadija knew his ways,  
That were not for conjugal days;

Off he tore from homely bliss,  
Solitude he could not miss;  
Often Hira Mount he sought,  
From its cave he thought a lot.

A stretch for days and nights,  
He oft meditation's heights,  
Thro' steps mental, beautiful,  
By forgetting free and full,

Worthless bodily deeds and needs,  
(Then of these the soul least heeds)  
Reached triumphant, ecstatic,  
Far above the world so sick.

Of the how and why of things,  
Of life's divers bitter stings,  
Of this world and of the next,  
Told in many a holy text,

Of the stinking vices seen,  
Of life aimless, shameless mean  
He there pondering wandered oft  
High, where all were calm and soft.

Thus reflecting, communing e'er,  
Concentrated, without a stir,  
Merging in the infinite,  
In that wondrous indefinite,

In that harmony divine,  
Where His glorious light doth shine,

Visions thrilling he could see,  
Rarest, highest ecstasy.

There he sat one ev'ning calm;  
Then the sun was shining warm;  
Lo! Soon darkness solemn came;  
Twinkling stars did right proclaim  
What a heavenly night it was,  
They in darkness brighter glass.

So complete wrapped in dream,  
In unconsciousness supreme,  
Far beyond all light and shade,  
In that hallowed spot he prayed,  
Until dawn emerging slow  
With a flood of silver glow,  
Filled the place around in full,  
'Tis a scene true beautiful.

From his trance he trembling woke,  
As a voice Divine thus spoke,  
"Thou art the Man,  
Thou art the Prophet of Allah".  
So, he was to show the way,  
Crowned with Prophethood that day.



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[The remaining nine sections are in prose.]

## **Sir Nizam Jung (1871–1955)**

Nizam Jung was a poet and statesman. After matriculation in 1884, he joined Trinity College, Cambridge, and was called to the Bar from the Inner Temple in 1895. He was specially interested in Shakespeare and the Romantic poets. He studied Latin and German poetry, and on his return joined the civil service of Nizam's government of the former Hyderabad State. His first volume of poetry was published in 1918. It showed marks of influence of classical poetry, and the *Times Literary Supplement* extolled its sonnets as "full of regular excellence, revealing a graceful fancy and true literary taste". *The Recantation* (1935), following his Arabian pilgrimage marked the religious tone of his poetry. He wrote on miscellaneous subjects – nature, meditations, mystic visions, war, eminent leaders, and phases of early Islamic history.

Jung's Islamic poems, especially those concerning the holy Prophet are inspiring and soulful. He was an accomplished scholar as well. His collected poems have been published by Zahir Ahmad, a scholar – administrator in 1954.



## **The Blessed Messenger**

### **(I)**

Unknown to self, unconscious of his power,  
He gazed aloft where Faith's bright vision lay.  
Beyond this earth, beyond the light of day  
He gazed afar as from a lofty tower.  
Morn, noon and night, in brightest, darkest hour  
He saw in all things near and far away  
In birth, in death, in growth and in decay,  
From man to lowliest worm, from star to flower  
The Maker's power revealed. Each wish, each thought  
Came as breath from Him, no longer far:  
A breath of light, light from breath divine,  
Charged with the Word. It was a beacon fraught  
With hope for all, a never – setting star  
Whose unextinguished beams through ages shine.

### **(II)**

Still gazing upward, waiting – such the part  
To test his worth the Power ordained on high,  
No torments forced the tribute of a sigh,  
No weak repining owned the secret smart.  
No hero's breast was pierced with such a dart,  
And none so meekly brave, did so defy,  
With dauntless bosom and with a steadfast eye,  
And patient faith, the anguish of the heart.  
Faith triumphed over all, and travails o'er,  
The world with all its gifts lay at his feet;  
But on another world was fix'd his gaze,  
Where he good alone shall live for evermore,

## **'My Poverty is My Pride'**

Silent awhile the Master stood,  
And gazed upon the scene  
Of heaven and earth before him spread,  
And all that lay between.

And dawning smile was on his brow;  
He gently waved his hand  
To bid some phantom form away,  
That did before him stand.

The questioning looks of those around  
He needs must satisfy –  
He who was sent all hearts to guide,  
Ordained by One on high.

"It was the World of vain desires,  
And joys that will not stay;  
It came tow'rd me with pomp and pride,  
I beckoned it away.

"I was not sent to be a king  
And worldly power to prize.  
Even here, upon this barren plain  
God's Kingdom round me lies.

"For me Heaven holds its promised store  
Of wealth that shall abide.  
Be the content my happiness,  
And poverty, my pride!"



## **Quba**

A lonely ruined hamlet  
That wears a crown of palm;  
Lapped in the peace of ages,  
It breathes a holy calm.

E'er since Arabia's Prophet  
First stepped upon its sod  
And with his own hand's labour  
Did raise a shrine to God.

A calm blue sky above it,  
A sandy plain around,  
Black stones in shapeless masses  
Lie strewn upon the ground.

God's grandeur little needeth  
The ministry of art;  
'Mid desolate scenes He claimeth  
The homage of man's heart

This shrine hath stood for ages,  
A desert monument  
Of one great deed accomplished –  
A heaven – ordained event,  
And years more than a thousand  
Have o'er its ruins rolled  
Since first it caught the tidings  
Which on this spot was told:  
How that unto the Prophet  
Had come the voice divine:  
"Turn thou unto the Kaaba"

An exile from his homeland,  
He smiled on fortune's frown,  
While with a heart undaunted  
He sought Medina town.

Here on his way he halted,  
Obedient to a sign  
That came from Heaven – an omen  
Of promised aid divine.

By some mysterious instinct  
His camel here knelt down:  
A presage to the Seer  
Of undisclosed renown.

He hailed the blessed omen,  
And with a trustful heart  
He stooped – Arabia's Prophet  
To 'play a mason's part!'



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\* The first stones of this Mosque were laid by the Prophet's own hands. (The mosque at Quba was founded by him on way to Medina during the *hijrat*.)

## **A Prayer in the Prophet's Shrine, Medina**

O Mighty spirit, pure and true,  
Ordained to bear His trust,  
That tried by sorest trials grew  
More faithful and more just!  
While here I bow in silent prayer  
I feel thee hovering nigh.  
"Let not the sinner's heart despair",  
A voice calls from on high.

"By grace alone will Heaven relieve  
The sinner of his woe".  
But let not this my heart deceive;  
For thou dost bid me know  
How vain the sanctimonious mood  
When prompted by some fear,  
How vain mere words of gratitude,  
Repentance insincere!

The prayer that from thy soul did rise  
On wings of ecstasy,  
Could pierce the veil of earth and skies  
And bring God near to thee,  
Through silent vigils of the night  
His voice was in thine ear;  
"Tis thine to lead mankind aright  
Toward light from darkness drear".

Prophet of God – an outlaw driven  
Away from hearth and home!

Thy feet on earth, thy head in heaven,  
It was for thee to roam

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammad*

An exile till by His command  
A happier home didst gain  
Where Islam ruled the subject land  
From proud Medina's plain.

Yea, thus amidst the toils of life,  
Its horrors and its woes  
Thy soul won pace through patient strife  
And stood serene where glows  
The light unseen around the Throne,  
To see what few had seen.  
Thou but a man, yet thine alone  
The glory that hath been.

A mortal thou, yet born to bear  
The weight of earth and heaven;  
A Prophet thou, yet to thy share  
A Sovereign's power was given.  
Prophet and king! Life's humblest task  
Ne'er did thy hands refuse;  
And ne'er didst thou God's bounty ask  
But for thy people's use.

In sworn allegiance at thy feet  
When Arabia lay,  
When Chiefs and Envoys came to greet  
Islam's new risen day,  
They saw thy glory that they might  
(Unlike the pomp of kings)  
In self-denying sense of Right  
That from God's guidance springs.

Saw thee in clouted garb, a man  
In God's own grace, arrayed,

A humble guardian of the plan  
Thy Master's hand had laid  
To quell all darkness with His light  
Through regions near and far,  
To make thee shine through Error's night  
A new and resplendent Star.

I feel God's presence in this shrine  
Fashioned by thine own hands.  
I see the fresh-hewn palm-trunks shine  
Where now this alcove stands.  
These arches' painted pageantry  
For me shall ne'er conceal  
Faith's unembellished majesty  
Thy palm-trees did reveal!

In rapt devotion on this floor  
My suppliant form I lay;  
Raise me to trace for evermore  
Thy footmarks on Life's way!  
O make my soul, reborn, to cast  
The dregs of sin aside,  
The future brighter than my past,  
With thee my light, my Guide!

For faith, with heart's blood in my tears,  
For faith to thee I cry;  
That faith to which God's grace appears  
On earth, in air and sky.  
What shades my soul's dark caverns fill,  
O, let them turn to light!  
Let rising hopes my being thrill  
With rising faith's delight!



## **Adam U-Shaikh (1917–2005)**

Shaikh graduated from Yusuf Ismail College, Bombay, and did his Ph.D. in Indo-Anglian Literature. He joined Indian Administrative Service, and retired as secretary to the Government. He was interested in the cooperative movement, and successfully executed some notable programmes in the field. He served with distinction as Education Secretary to the Government of Maharashtra, and was an education-enthusiast, and a member of several academic bodies of the universities. He also served for a term as the City Commissioner. He has written a number of articles on educational problems. His single collection of poems *The Courting Lake and other poems* was published in 1965. The following poem is culled from this volume.



## **Minstrel of God, Mohammad**

Minstrel of God, heroic Arab scout!  
How musically to Man didst thou recount  
The Thunder – lightning Vision of Hira's pride, could rout  
And shatter Hobal's head where once they sprout  
Tongued human blood into emerald fount  
To clear tribal wrong or ghostly account;  
You visited priests and shrines with the gout!  
Stud the threads of Prophet's rosary!  
Time was you cried for milk and raised mudpies  
Feared the crowd and dreamt in caravansaries  
Or outwatching the Bear, ploughed desert's immensity  
Till Khadija's love taught ye life's glossary  
To the world – reluming Book that was yet to be!



## A. Rauf Luther (1916–1988)

Coming from a respectable non-Muslim family, A. Rauf Luther was born in 1916 in Sialkot district (now in Pakistan), and embraced Islam under inspiration from a Sufi saint. He received his college education at Hoshiarpur and Bhawalpur, and did a stint in the Indian Army during World War II. Subsequently he joined the Pakistan Civil Service, and retired as Assistant Director in the Information Department. He fell victim to the dagger of some sectarian assassin in September, 1988, at Lahore.

Luther was fond of classics of English poetry, and himself turned out to be a poet. He was predisposed to Sufism, and wrote a number of Sufic poems. He took his spiritual mentor's advice as the guiding principle of his life: "Love of the Holy Prophet is most essential, and I should care to rear it in my heart". Luther authored *Muhammad – Wisdom of Life*, and wrote versified biographies of Christ, Buddha and Ali – *Cradle to Cross: Jesus Christ*; *Lotus of Love*, and *Ali the Divine Inspired Soul*. But his best known work is the Prophet's biography *The Epic of Faith* (1981). He portrays the life as "Enshrined in numerous books" and in "Authentic version" ("To my Reader"). Invariably each section opens with an appropriate Quranic verse as an epigraph.



## **Mohammad Love of Gracious God**

Mohammad Apostle for all time  
Over the universe held sublime;  
His morals, manners, way of life,  
A glow to nourish religious life;  
Miraculous were his words indeed,  
Miraculous birth, death and deed.

Above creations rules as Lord,  
Dionysian suspicions played fraud;  
Generosity mingled with his bliss,  
Lyrics of heavens for men to bliss;  
Infidels could not crush his Faith,  
Men of the world embraced his Faith.

Modesty, virtue, purity,  
Eternal in him, guide lovely;  
Reared love, nourished affection,  
In faith steered no detraction  
Nectar he offered to all men,  
Guided strangers, kith and kin.  
And heeding not for life and death,  
Grounded in every soul his Faith,  
Rehearsed Scriptures of all Prophets,  
Arabian born leader of Prophets.



## **Report of First Revelation**

Mohammad came, dishevelled hair,  
His eyes were wild, he in quiver;  
Khadija led him to room another,  
That Children may not over hear.  
He said: "On Hira Mount was peace,  
The stars were glimmering happily,  
I offered prayers, went to sleep,  
I heard a crack of thunder deep;  
I saw a cloud hung overhead,  
It was towards Mecca spread.  
Twice I heard a voice for me,  
I could hardly answer freely;  
Thereafter voice requested me,  
'Repeat what I may speak to thee',  
I knew not what to him convey.  
'In name of God, the Sovereign Lord,  
The God who made men of clod  
Of blood. Taught him what he knew not.  
Nearer his soul has knowledge brought'.  
It happened when I was awake".  
Khadija said: God won't forsake.  
He loves you, He will never part  
You from the Truth. Ye good at heart.  
Promise you keep, ye are honest,  
Generous and kind, shy but modest;  
Dear husband! Be of good cheer,  
Allah has chosen Prophet dear".



## **First Public Address**

He first created circle narrow,  
Family, friends, strangers few.  
Time had arrived to gather prow,  
And make the Message public now.  
And then he had a revelation,  
To give momentum to his mission:  
"Grieve not for them who enjoy  
Tell them you are but God's Envoy  
Tell them you are a warner plain,  
God created earth and heaven;  
'And all that is within the space,  
Truth everywhere. Let people trace  
Truth presides at all works,  
You have been given seven verses,  
Of prayer, and holy Quran,  
Serve God till you reach the heaven".  
So now he gathered Quresh sage,  
On Mount Safa to voice message.  
'Did you hear me telling a lie',  
'Never' they spoke unanimously.  
'If I say behind the mountain,  
Lies a huge army hidden  
To attack you and destroy you,  
Would you then believe?' "Rely on you  
We do believe, we should believe".



## **His Followers Tortured**

Persisted pagan's persecution,  
And he had to seek protection;  
But he had some following poorer.  
Less influential, but as brother,  
Bear the brunt of all oppression.  
I shall now make Yasir's mention.  
Both of his legs were tied with ropes,  
To two camels to opposite poles,  
Summaya had been raped and torn  
To pieces by some rude pagan.  
Bilal was laid on burning sand,  
A heavy stone was made to land  
Upon his legs, upon his chest  
But he ever cried, 'God is blest'.  
Others suffered vilification.  
Calumny, abuse, frustration.



## **His Appearance**

Mohammad of the middle stature,  
square built with sinewy feature;  
He was vigorous and strong,  
Corpulency could not throng;  
Well-shaped head and capacious,  
On neck well set, like pillar fix;  
Emerging from his ample chest,  
Forehead high at temples vast.  
His veins extending to his brows  
His raven hair on shoulders moved,  
Thick, long and uniform was his beard.  
Deportment calm and equable  
Dignified, graceful, affable;  
Of captivating sweetness smile,  
Complexion ruddy, bold yet mild;  
Radiance of his countenance,  
With supernatural light intense.



## **Arrival at Medina**

On the eighth day of the Hijra  
Prophet reached the village of Aqba;  
Now persecutions seemed as ended,  
Era of peace had just commenced.

After a few days rest in there,  
To Yathreb he did leave as leader;  
In the house of Amr bin Awf,  
Reigned peace, tranquility under roof.  
Ali too joined him at that place,  
They met, the meeting was a grace;  
In lively mood morning appeared,  
A glorious morning which had cheered;  
People of Yathreb to receive  
The Prophet, once a fugitive,  
Destined to be the Prophet – king,  
The shatterer of the vicious ring.



## **Blessed Names of Mohammad**

### **'MOHAMMAD' (Praised One)**

*Mohammad* is the praised Prophet,  
By whom Nature, heaven, planet;  
Yonder heavens and the creatures,  
Valleys, mountains, verdure, flowers.  
This is the Prophet's name on earth,  
Recite '*Mohammad*', dwell in mirth.

### **'AHMAD' (Highest Praise)**

With *Ahmad* mean we highest praised,  
To see him, angels were amused;  
*Ahmad* is his name on the skies  
With the angels and the Hurees.  
Recite '*Ahmad*', with angels live,  
Allah to you will blessing give.

### **'HAMID' (Praiser of God)**

*Hamid* is the praiser of God,  
*Hamid* is the glorifier of God;  
Much more than David with his hymns,  
*Mohammad* ever praised with hymns;  
Sitting, standing, lying, sleeping,  
At home, abroad, even reaping.

### **'BASHIR' (Giver of Glad Tidings)**

*Bashir* is giver of glad tidings,  
For ever Paradise blessings  
Of the Hurees, of the angels,  
If man does not evil entangles;

For, his sojourn, is way of life,  
Ephemeral and spiritual life.

**‘NAZEER’ (Warner of the Doom)**

*Nazeer* is warner of the Doom,  
He is the Saviour from the Doom;  
Approach to God with righteous deed,  
Torments of evil never heed.  
He told infidels died in Badr.  
‘Didn’t I warn you of this hour’?

**‘YA SEEN’ (Secret Title)**

*Ya Seen* is also a Title,  
Title of Love for Last Apostle,  
The secret of all secrecies,  
Merciful, showering sympathies,  
Upon the rustic, pagan brute,  
Innocent, *righteous* and the rude.

**‘MUZAMMIL’ (Wrapped in Blanket)**

*Muzammil* is wrapped in the Blanket,  
To meditate and concentrate;  
Upon the problems of the world,  
For guiding people to their Lord;  
O Blessed Guide of God! Grant us  
Reverence and Love we seek, you bless.

**‘MUDASSIR’ (The Guide Aright)**

*Mudassir* is the Guide Aright,  
To Final Goal with love and light,  
Enwrapping men in sheet of light,  
And inculcating sweetest blight,

Reveal to us that Love and Light  
O Lord of Love! O Lord of Light!

**'MUSTAFA' (Chosen One)**

*Mustafa* is the chosen one,  
Among Prophets, and creation;  
This universe is due to him,  
It is with him, it is for him;  
O Chosen Prophet! Pick us up,  
From degradation to the top.

**'NOOR' (Effulgence)**

*Noor*, Effulgence, Theophany,  
Which has only God's company;  
It is spread in universe;  
With us O God! with effulgence,  
That we may live in Benevolence.

**'MURTAZA' (Honoured, Revered)**

*Murtaza* is honoured, revered,  
Blessed, love – kneaded and favour'd;  
Pride of earth and Pride of Heaven,  
Pride of Nature and creation;  
Bless us with honour, reverence too,  
The threshold of your love we woo.

**'SADIQ' (True and Truthful)**

*Sadiq*, we mean, True and truthful,  
Mohammad was the most truthful  
Of all the people live in the world,  
The enemies too accepted the Word;

In face of opposition, foes,  
He spoke the Truth of Faith – Bestows.

**‘SAYYED’ (Benevolent Leader)**

*Sayyed* is benevolent leader,  
Of whole humanity here, earlier,  
Mohammad is the Chief of Prophets,  
Prayer – leader of all Prophets,  
Though came in desert, dune and sand,  
With him he has authority ground.

**‘MUNIR’ (Resplendent Light)**

*Munir* is pure resplendent Light,  
The Sun, the Moon from him get light;  
He is the source, Spring of Light,  
He is the Light above all Light,  
O God! grant us bliss of this Light,  
We may excel in Light, delight.

**‘MUNEEB’ (Advancer unto Right)**

*Muneeb*, advancer unto Right,  
To Thone of God with love-and-light,  
Allah extended sweetest rope,  
Get hold of it with every hope.  
So, rung by rung, go up the stair,  
To see you anxious angels there.



**Krishna Srinivas (1913–2007)**  
**Padma Bhushan**

A doyen of modern Indian English poetry, Dr Srinivas was the Founder-President of the World Poetry Society and Editor-in-Chief of its intercontinental monthly journal *POET*. In 1971 he travelled across the world to hold poetry – reading sessions. The Poetry Societies of various countries and many foreign universities conferred awards and honorary degrees on him. Often he led Indian delegations to the World Poetry meets, and was nominated by various bodies and intellectuals for the NOBEL AWARD.

His well-known poems are *Dance of Dust*, *Maya*, *Everest*, and *Five Elements*. He also authored a series of long poems on religious leaders – Sankra, Ramanujam, Madhav, Christ, and Mohammad (*a long poem on Islam*, 1983). A few passages from the last named poem are presented below.

Affectionately called as 'Krishna' by his admirers, he was an avid promoter of young poetic talent, and was a true humanist, extending respect to all faiths.



## **Muhammad**

And Muhammad came,  
Prophet of Islam,  
His choice the dialect  
Of honeyed Arabic,  
He came

A Lighthouse of Wisdom,  
An Ocean of learning,  
A Torch of Reform,  
A Patriarch of Virtues –  
An Al-Ameen.

He raged at hordes,  
Revelling in adultery,  
Gambling and drinking;  
Women stripped naked at Ka'ba:  
Virgins sepulchered alive;  
Stones and trees idolled  
And Arab world  
Writhing in agony,  
Ignorance and indigence  
And degradation.

Sudden His Mind is illumined  
And received *Wahi*  
And he plunges deep  
Into crowds of the meek  
And PROCLAIMS:  
God is in Heaven  
Not in trees and stones:  
Worship Him,  
Love Him,

Adore Him  
He is All Truth  
He is All Justice,  
He is All Mercy.

For thirteen full years  
Muhammad preached and preached  
But Arabia ignored him,  
Hounded him;  
Taunted him  
For another eight years  
But he stood  
Unbroken,  
Unassailed,  
Undaunted;

His Gentility  
His Truthfulness  
His passion for Allah –  
Praying all night,  
Sans food;  
His humble hut:  
His life with low  
And miserable:  
His MILLAT  
Made him Friend of the Trodden

He heralded Renaissance,  
Born centuries after him;  
He knit the hearts  
Of millions and millions  
Into One Mankind,  
One Race,  
One people,

And what God said,  
What God will'd,  
He just Proclaimed.

Muhammad has said:

**Laqad Karramna Bani Adam –**

All are children of Adam,  
Respectable and dignified,  
No Arab, no non-Arab  
No white, no non-white  
Superior to another:  
Noblest of us  
Is the most pious  
Most mindful of His Mission.

And *Shariah*  
Is surest road to Reality,  
Accenting  
The Right of God  
For every one to heed:  
The Rights of his  
To follow for ever:  
The Rights of others  
Over him as fellow being:  
The Rights and means  
Allah has gifted him.

Hope in adversity,  
Humility in success.  
Muhammad  
Was Last of Revelations –  
Abraham,

Moses,  
Christ –  
A spontaneous

Passionate  
Prophet of Excellence.  
His simple humanity,  
A Man among men,  
His intense realism  
Shunning mystical remoteness,  
His Covenant  
Of Divine Monarchy,  
His rage for Peace,  
His fury for ideals  
Flame as ageless Fires  
In corridors of Time.

Muhammad has gifted us  
Justice, Tolerance  
And Equality to all,  
And people to rule,  
Sans ceremonies,  
Wastefulness,  
Duplicity  
And Arbitrariness  
And Rulers  
Yoked to People's Wills –  
Thus scorning autocracy  
Of a Byzantine  
Or Persian rule.

Muhammad proclaimed  
That all the fruits  
Of Mass Labour

Reach one and all –  
Rich taxed  
And poor protected  
And Government organized  
By men of Worth,  
Distinction and Wisdom,  
Piety and humanity.  
To elite governing state  
He gifted them the SHURA  
A council of Learned Men,  
Renowned,  
Knowledgeable,  
All hearts goldened;  
And to armed forces  
He enforced control,  
Forbearance,  
And compassion.



## **Kamala (Das) Surayya (1934–2009)**

Kamala Das came from an illustrious family of scholars and writers of Kerala. She was a bilingual poet, and started writing early in English and Malayalam under the pen names of Kamala and Madhavikutty respectively. She was a versatile writer and columnist, poet, novelist and short-story writer. She authored more than half-a-dozen of collections of English poems, including *Descendants* (1967) and *Only the Soul Can Sing* (1996). She was widely travelled, and received a number of prestigious international literary awards. She used bold imagery themes, and was an explorer of love in its various shades. Her spirit of quest and studies led her to embrace Islam in December 1999. Subsequently, she wrote under the pen-name 'Surayya'. *Ya! Mohammed*, the poem reproduced below, appeared in her collection of Malayalam poems *Ya! Allah* (2002), that was translated into English under her consent and approval.



## **Ya! Mohammed**

Ya Mohammed,  
May the lord shower  
His grace upon him!  
You are the golden dawn  
That illuminates the dark Arabian nights.  
The last prophet  
Who fought for fidelity and truth.  
We hear about the luminosity of that face  
Even after the long fourteen centuries.  
We are unfortunate  
Who came late,  
We blame our fate.  
Oh, the master  
Esteemed by more than  
Forty generations  
We prepare for you,  
The banquets of love.  
You came like the raindrops,  
On the desert, unexpectedly;  
The rain has long gone,  
Yet, as a golden memory, it remains,  
In each tiny speck of sand.

(Translated by *Kalim Ahmed*)



## Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore (1940- )

A prolific poet and author of more than 40 poetic works, Daniel Moore was born in Oakland, California. His first two books of poetry were published in 1964 and 1972. He has received numerous prestigious poetic and literary awards. Even a seeker of spiritual peace, Moore's trajectory led him to Islam via Sufism in 1970, adopting Abdal Hayy as his Islamic name, which he modified, later, as Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore. He suddenly renounced writing poetry; but after a gap of ten years there was a spurt of inspiration, and his best Sufic poetry gushed forth in streams. Now he is often referred to as "American Islam's poet laureate". Some of his better known poetic collections are: *The Desert is the Only Way Out*, *The Blind Beekeeper*; *The Ramadan Sonnets*; *Laughing Buddha, the Weeping Sufi*; *Coattails of the Saint*; *The Flame of Transformation Turns to Light (Ninety-Nine Ghazals Written in English)*, and *Sparrow on the Prophet's Tomb*. Besides, he is an essayist and librettist too. He wrote four Bawa Muhaiydeen Fellowship plays on Islamic subjects, and produced a puppet play *The Mystical Romance of Layla & Majnun* (2002).

The following poems on the Prophet of Islam are culled from different collections of the poet, as indicated at the end of each text. They pulsate with live devotion, and sometimes evoke the intoxicating flavour of the *Na'ats* (poetic eulogies of the Prophet) by Jami (Persian) and Fazil Bareilvi (Urdu).



## **Man Among Us**

Muhammad whose genealogical tree went right straight back to Adam, who said he was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay – how can we properly praise him, surrounded as we are by madmen who think they are sane and saviors, but who shrink from the light of day?

Muhammad, who at six was an orphan, and whose darkness was removed by angels, who entered the valleys and date palms burst into fruit above him – how can we possibly taste that quality of his wisdom when oceans of plastic silence fill our ears with their deafening din?

Muhammad, who grew to be trustworthy, even his enemies trusted him, who waited for three days on a corner to pay back a debt he owed someone – how can such honor be followed, in a world so ethically stifled, when the very foundations of trust have been laughed into mud and ruin?

Muhammad who stood on the mountaintop and saw the sky fill with angels but distrusted such visions as raving and was afraid his mind had snapped – how can we see such stillness in the pool of his heart so thunderstruck when our own streets are hallucinations like savage animals trapped?

Muhammad who let the Truth lead him, and his moon-like light filled the tents of the people whose hearts were empty but open as sky, how can our people be touched by the stature of such a being when most of them are full of sickness and most of them want to die?

Muhammad whose talk was like mountain streams clearly crossing rocks and splashing into pools of clarity where we could finally see our light – how can this thick time know him?

The doorways are filled with ghosts, the dumb are leading the  
eloquent, the leaders are fearful of insight!

Muhammad who went through the heavens on the back of the  
lightningbolt mule and whose gaze was steady and true face to  
face with the Face of the One – how can mechanical thinking or  
the heart like a clock face in ice begin to glimpse this other world  
with its other moon and sun?

Muhammad who led the armies with nothing but banners and  
trust against mercantile idol – subscribers with the weapons  
and wealth of kings – how can simplicity make sense to us, so  
overpowered by the magic of High Technology's sorcery which  
clots up our senses with "things?"

Muhammad whose victory just humbled him more than he was  
before so that thousands finally accepted the worship of Allah  
alone – is it the same situation now as then for us, hard-hearted  
people asleep who'd rather sit in a stupor and worship bits of wood  
or stone?

Muhammad whose Gate – Opening crashed the iceberg rock  
right open to let us enter a world where actual events shed light,  
how to sit or go through a doorway, drink water or lie down to  
sleep, how to face absolute Oneness without losing balance from  
fright.

Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon you, Prophet and Messenger  
of Light, the figure you made among people put love in their  
hearts for the Truth – how can the graveyard society we live in  
possibly hear your heartbeat when their drunken hearts drink  
darkness sold at the tyrant's corner booth?

O Prophet, O man among us, O light that goes ahead, who gave  
out the last coin left to you when you lay on your first deathbed –

how can such stark reality reach into us when the air is so  
filled with lead and such mention of life only bores the snoring  
multitudes of the dead?

O Light of the human touch in everything, Praiser and  
Praiseworthy in one, we are naked before Allah at last, and we  
need your enlightening sun

(1984) *Selected Poems* (Zilzal Press)



## **The Prophet Muhammad Walked In**

The Prophet Muhammad walked in – his face a moon – his head  
represented by God's flame

The room filled with rose-scent – the windows with doves – in our  
hearts we scented God's flame

How on earth did a man like this come among us? How beloved  
of Allah – how kind!

All who saw him as nothing but a mad relative became demented  
by God's flame

The world was reversed by him – inside became outside – outside  
became in –

Each word came from Truth's conflagration – descended by God's  
flame

It burned up this old world and replaced it with a pure one –  
Both world and self-entering purifying fire – even if resenting  
God's flame

His touch was sure – his tread so light – his smile creation's first  
morning on earth –

In his eyes was inexpressible perfection – augmented by God's flame

His voice pronounced words spaced like individual pearls on a string –

We hear them as clearly today – as though aged and fermented by  
God's flame

A star straight above him in the Unseen points him out wherever  
he goes –

Allah's increasing love for him through the centuries – as  
portended by God's flame

As the Prophet passes we long for him to stay – to turn to us –  
bathing in his light –

Allah's most beloved before anything was even invented by God's  
flame

His sweetheart – His intimate – His Messenger – His most  
cherished creation –

Just hearing his name pours new stars into the sky – supplemented  
by God's flame

In a dark smoky corner of the world – as far as China – as near as  
our jugular vein –

The pulse of the Divine throbs out his name – linked for ever with  
God's – implemented by God's flame

This firmament – each lineament – each filament – each element –

*Ameen* his graces flow without limit or measurement –  
documented by God's flame!

(20.06.2002) – From *The Flame of Transformation Turns to Light –  
Ninety-nine Ghazals Written in English.*



## **The Prophet Muhammad Arose One Morning**

*The Prophet Muhammad arose one morning  
and by evening it was obvious he was no  
ordinary mortal.*

*He was a heart that spoke to a mouth that  
spoke to the ears of multitudes  
And it was our hearts that heard him  
through the dust and blood of time and its  
wrenching its smooth valleys and its  
sudden explosions its  
disappearance and its appearance again as  
faces at a window asking to be let in  
to Allah's portico facing the radiant light of the  
central breath.*

I am aloft in the air with these thoughts  
in the thrill of a fuselage heading east  
confounded by the possibility of it as we  
float forward without entirely  
evaporating in space as buoyant as a bubble  
propelled by a superior force.

*He came down from the cave changed utterly  
all the years of the world suddenly folded into him  
literally speaking of those to come through  
those who'd gone before from first to last in the  
perfect order of grammatical tones and  
spectacular intonations.*

The light of his face goes before this  
airplane in the dark

*English Poems on Prophet Mohammad*

The light of his star goes before this  
planet as its anchoring beam  
The light of his heart in our hearts in what  
makes us sane

29.04.2006 (en route to the Grand Mawlid at Wembley)  
London Extracted from *Coattails of the Saint*



## **Muhammad's Birth**

About his birth the whole world knows  
in the depths of its atoms.  
Amina bore him and he was immediate  
in his praise of Allah.

Some say he first did sajda, others  
that he spoke the shahadah  
and then was silent.

Already at birth he was the Prophet of Unity, the  
movie played backwards  
from its glorious end.  
His father Abdallah, from the tribe of Hashim,  
died without seeing him.  
The wet nurse Halima took him to her heart  
and their goat's milk flowed.  
And the desert burst into superfluous flower  
from his singular presence.

The night time covered him  
with its spangled blanket.  
The day fluffed the wool of its sides for him to  
tend it like huddled sheep.  
A cloud went with him to shade him from the heat  
at the desert saint's surprise banquet.  
(He could see the Prophet's space among the  
caravan leaders and called out for him to fill it -  
*'Where is the boy who has come, by Allah,  
to show me the Prophet's seal?' - a mole  
it is said, between his shoulder blades, with  
circling hairs like a horse's mane)*

He grew up trustworthy among men for whom  
this was a difficult quality.  
He took from the cloth of Unity  
the Black Stone of Eternity  
and placed it bodily  
in the side of God's House,  
cornerstone finality,  
stone we kiss  
out of awe of God's Majesty.

(From *Sparrow on the Prophet's Tomb*) 2001.



## **Sparrow on the Prophet's Tomb**

### **1**

O sparrow perched on a corner of the  
Prophet's tomb  
Cheeping above thousands of bowed heads murmuring  
whose glassy chirps hit high notes of  
purity under the eaves in this  
Mosque of God's Messenger  
that resides in two territories of space –  
this world seen, the next world  
unseen –  
in this shadow existence of this signal presence among us  
visitors from even farther away than  
China pass to greet him,  
and in your little feathered body in the swooping freedom to  
come and go all day to visit him  
speeding from a tall beam  
across choruses of hearts  
gratefully weeping or tranquil with an ecstatic  
inner moonrise  
just to be here.

### **2**

Sparrow what is your name? Is it "*Constant Devotion*"?  
Is it "*I Want To be Near*"? "*Praiseworthy Friend*"?  
Is your name "*Generations To Come*"?  
You fluff your breast and preen your wing  
where men cannot go, you dart into the  
dark of the tomb for deeper conversation.

We would all go with you if we could,  
squeeze our tiny feathery bodies through the  
gold grille work, past the  
guards in their pea-green uniforms,  
to sit on a corner of the Prophet's tomb in the  
dark to hear him  
return the salutations of  
such outpouring of awed adorations of men and women,  
each one  
passing by that undying presence, trying to  
sneak a peak through the golden porthole,  
hearts boiling with overwhelming emotions.

You land and sing.  
You cock your head.  
You watch us from your high perch with a  
cool eye.

*(From Sparrow on the Prophet's Tomb)*



## Abdul Majeed Khan (1935- )

Born at Sagar (Karnataka) Majeed Khan is an academician, trilingual writer, translator, poet, essayist, and fiction writer. He writes with equal accomplishment in English, Urdu and Kannada. His English *Umpire's Wickets* was well received and so was his dystopian fantasy (also in English) *Andher Nagari* (2007) for its satirical dissection of the corrupt civil administration and mismanagement of an imaginary town. The *Rah Guzar* (2010) Urdu rendering of some classical poems was received with critical acclaim, and revealed his poetic sensitivity of both the languages. His masterpiece *An Elegy and Other Poems* revives Gray's pathos vividly transferred to an urban setting. He combines brilliantly lyricism of tender moments memories with hawkish vigour of social chipping and popular disillusionment. His *Nineteen Ninety One* (1993) is a highly acclaimed poetic collection. His elegy on his mother is memorable and evokes the echoes of Cowper's melancholy poem on his mother's portrait.

Khan has written an informative and impressive travelogue *From the Pyramids to the Dome of Rock* (2007). He has translated the Quran in English Verse – a marvellous feat of literary skill and religious devotion. He has received several prestigious awards. *Muhammad a Biography in Verse* was first published in 1991, and the revised edition with an aesthetic format came out in 2011. The extracts given below are from the latter version.



## **Muhammad's Profession**

Trade alone was considered a respectable vocation of the day.  
Muhammad, too, took to it, and pursued it in an honest way.  
His virtue and sincerity, truthfulness and manners stood him in  
good stead.

And opened the gates of success, and earned him great fame and  
respect.

He never broke a promise once he made; never from the right  
path he strayed.

One of his merchant-friends, Abdullah, relates:

"In those days I had a business deal with him  
Which was partly done and needed conclusion.

Telling him, 'I will come back and settle soon',  
I took leave of him but forgot all about it after reaching home.  
Three days later, suddenly remembering it, I went to see him  
again.

And was dumbstruck to see him sitting at the same spot, awaiting  
my return.

Yet no ripple of displeasure knit his noble forehead or brow  
At that unforgivable lapse of mine which few would tolerate  
somehow.

But he only said in a very gentle and humble tone:

'You caused me great discomfort my dear comrade;  
Three days I have been waiting for you since you left this place'.



## **The Call of the Inner Consciousness**

Even in his teens while grazing the sheep, and as a youth when he  
travelled far and wide,

Muhammad was constantly fascinated by many marvellous sights  
Which nature displayed on earth and in the sky.

He thought they were the very manifestations of the Maker  
Supreme.

And true to the 'Hanfa' spirit, which sought Truth in response to  
its inner urge,

And in a manner free and independent, unlike the masses at large,  
Who blindly followed the pagan ways and worshipped spirits  
sinister and foul,

Muhammad always relied, of course on the light of his conscious  
soul

To seek, to know, and to understand him who alone is worshipful.  
In quest of solitude, to meditate alone, he chose to retire to a cave  
in the lap of Mt. Hira

Which lay three miles north of Makkah.

Sometime alone, and sometimes with his spouse,  
With food for days, he went there, and feeling free from  
obstructions

He pondered over Allah's implicit instructions.



## **Treatment of the Captives**

Muslims behaved exceptionally well with all prisoners of the Badr battle.

They offered them wholesome fare and themselves ate crumbs and dates.

They even provided clothes to those who had nothing but rags to wear.

Among the captives there was held a certain Saheel-bin Umar, a powerful orator.

He always used to revile Islam wherever public meetings were held,  
And incite the infidels against Muslims, and urge them to take revenge.

Hence a few Sahaba now did suggest that all his teeth be plucked out

So that he should not vent out his spleen again, nor clearly brag or shout.

But the Prophet did not approve of it, and being very merciful he said:

'If I maim or mar or unjustly distort any part of his body,  
Though I'm the Prophet of God, He will do the same to me'.  
Some spirited companions did desire that all the captives be done to death.

But their suggestions too Muhammad did not accept.  
Instead he decided that the rich should ransom themselves out.

And each of those who were poor but literate enough  
Should teach ten Muslim children at least to read and write.  
And those who lacked this skill even were set free in the way of God.



## **Character and Manners**

Prophet Muhammad was very modest, sociable and merciful.  
He loved both the young and the old equally well.

He was magnanimous, munificent and liberal.

He was wont to serve his guests himself.

While at home he would himself attend to the domestic duties.  
He darned his torn clothes, mended his slippers, and milched the  
goat.

While in a gathering he would sit amidst the folk with no  
reservations.

While building the Masjid-e-Nabwi and while digging the trench  
at Ahzab,

He worked and laboured hard with all other companions and  
compatriots.

Muhammad fondled children, loved orphans, helped the poor, and  
listened to the plaint of the oppressed.

He helped the debtors pay back their loans, bestowed affection on  
slaves and bondsmen.

He was kind and sympathetic towards the weak, consoled the rich  
assisted the helpless,

Forgave the guilty, prayed for the well being of the foes even.

He took cognizance of the neighbours to help them if necessary,  
and sent them gifts.

He even went to their houses and helped them in their domestic  
chores.



## **The Last Hajj of Our Prophet** **[After the Completion of the Hajj]**

The next morning, after prayer, he set out, and reaching  
Arafat, sojourned there.  
When the afternoon declined he mounted Qaswa and came to a  
field.  
Sitting on the saddle he delivered the Hajj sermon.  
That was the first time when Islam had emerged in all its glory  
and splendour.  
And all traditions of tyranny and ignorance were eased.

### **Muhammad said:**

"Indeed all past conventions, customs and usages are under my  
feet today".  
The Arabian sands always used to turn red due to revengeful  
bloodshed.  
To day this endless series of civil strife was terminated.  
And for this proclaimer of prophecy; first of all presents an  
emulative example of his own dynasty.  
"All murders done out of ignorance are rendered unaccountable  
today.  
And first of all I declare nullified, the bloodshed affecting my  
dynasty.  
The revenge wreaked for the murder of the son of Rabeeya-bin-  
Harris".  
.....  
"All practices of tyrannical usury have been abolished henceforth.  
And first of all I nullify the usury of my dynasty: that of  
Abbas-bin-Abdul Muttalib.  
.....

"Have fear of God in matters pertaining to women.  
You have rights over them, and they have rights over you".  
.....

"Your slaves are but your slaves. Be just in their affairs.  
Let them eat what you eat, and wear what you wear".  
.....

"Your life and belongings are mutually as precious between you  
Till the Doomsday, as this day is in this holy city and this holy  
month".  
.....

"Every Musalman is a brother to another Musalman, all Muslims  
are brethren".  
.....

"And no Arab is superior to a non-Arab, and vice versa.  
You are all sons of Adam, and Adam was made of earth".  
.....  
.....

"I leave amidst you all, a thing which if you hold fast to, never will  
you go astray.  
And that is the Book of God".  
.....  
.....

"In religion guard yourself against excessive exaggeration and  
hyperbole.  
The communities that preceded you were destroyed by these  
frailties alone".



## S.L. Peeran (1950– )

Peeran is a bilingual (English and Urdu) writer, poet, editor and Sufi scholar. He has published 12 collections of his poems, that have been widely reviewed and appreciated at home and abroad. An insightful critical book *Indian English Poetry: Searching New Ground* has come out lately (2013). He writes meditative and reflective verse with distinct Sufistic verve, and his mystical insights invariably reveal his sharp social awareness of the prevailing ethos. He has done a book of short stories as well – *The Glass House and Other Stories* (2004). He edits the *Sufi World*, a quarterly Journal, and has written a book on the impact of Islam and Sufism on India (1998). His first collection of poems *The Golden Times* appeared in 2000 A.D. and was followed by the 'Moments' series – *In Rare Moments* (2007), *In Sacred Moments* (2008), and *Glittering Moments* (2009).

Peeran was a member of higher judiciary, and served on the Appellate Tribunal (of Customs, Excise and Gold Control). The following extracts are taken from his long poem *The Message of Islam*.



## **Message of Islam**

As times passed the worship of Allah  
The one Supreme God was forgotten.  
Idolatry took its place in Kaaba.  
Three hundred and sixty idols placed therein.

Then arose in sixth century A.D.  
A man of impeccable character  
Known to Arabs as 'The Truthful'  
'The Trustworthy', Muhammad

When he reached forty years of his age  
Gabriel the Arch Angel brought  
Message from Allah, The Holy Quran  
To be continued for next twenty-two years.

In peaceful methods Muhammad  
Spread Allah's message of monotheism  
To shun the practice of idol worship  
To unite and live in brotherhood.

To shun all evil practices –  
To bury female child, break bonds.  
To give up fornication, adultery.  
Live in purity and in peace.

Muhammad and his followers  
Attacked day-in and day-out  
Tortured, Sumaiya first woman  
To be murdered in brutal way.

His followers migrated to Abyssinia  
Meccans followed them to complain

To their king but king Negus  
Shows compassion and protects them.

For ten long years, Muhammad  
Spreads his message peacefully  
Bearing all hardships, pain  
Agony and untold sufferings.

Allah permits him to migrate  
To Yasrib, later to be named  
As Madina, Prophet's town.  
Those people protected and loved him.

Battles after battles fought  
Between Allah's beloved, the Muslims  
The followers of Islam and idolaters  
To vest control of Mecca, the Kaaba.

Where pilgrims gathered once  
In a year for Haj to visit  
Kaaba and to circumambulate  
To sacrifice animals as done by Abraham.



## **Last Hajj**

The oneness of Lord, the Beneficent  
The Merciful is proclaimed  
Muslims world over face Kaaba  
Five times day-in and night-out

To pray, to bow and kneel down  
To lift both the hands to seek  
Allah's help, in supplication  
For his Mercy, His Help, for Goodness

Holy Quran is the message of Allah  
Prophet's words are pearls of wisdom  
For guidance, for solace for peace  
For leading Mankind to straight paths.

Among the teachings is to treat  
All the men and women  
As brothers and sisters  
And to treat the neighbour as your own

To seek refuge from the path  
And ways of the Devil, the Shaitan  
To shun the diabolic nature  
Of man, to conquer your own self.

.....

Purify your heart, make it golden.  
Be regular in charity to the poor,  
To the wayfarer, beggars, travellers.  
Feed one and all from your daily food.

Pray at all times, tune your mind  
Heart and soul to Allah, alone  
Keep fast in the month of Ramzan  
Invite known, unknown to dine with you.

Once in life time make the holy  
Pilgrimage to Mecca, Medina.  
Perform Haj in white unsewn  
Shroud, think and bow before Allah.

Seek forgiveness for all past sins,  
Committed knowingly, unknowingly  
Take a vow to lead a pure life.

To live like a perfect human being.  
Shun all abominations, all obscenity.

Respect women of all ages, keep  
Your eyes down, do not stare them.

Let women remain in purdah to save virtue.



## **Alamgir Hashmi (1951- )**

Alamgir Hashmi is an eminent Pakistani poet, educator and critic. He is frequently published in international journals and has published seven collections of his English poems. He is considered a modernist, and often introduces subdued satire in his poems. Though a humanist and internationalist at heart, he is keenly appreciative of his native scenes, language and culture. He has written some noteworthy English Ghazals as well. *America is a Punjabi Word*, *My Second in Kentucky*, and *The Time in Lahore* are among the better known collections of his English poems.

'The Prophet' first appeared in Hashmi's *Inland and Other Poems*, Islamabad: Gulmohar Press (1988). He has also written a poem on Gautam (the Buddha).



## **The Prophet**

They did not care when he  
first spoke about it.  
They had seen the famines,  
wars, and migrations through,  
lived off leaves of a big tree  
with roots down the Mediterranean,  
and on palmy days  
worked it out,  
more or less amicably.  
There was that sub-clause  
about periodic tributes  
or an indulgence like sacrifice;  
what with it!

But there he was, telling them  
something, to wit  
in the name of Allah;  
in fact the One  
and the Only Allah.

They wondered at the singularity,  
the one complete wholeness of his thought  
one from which any part could get purchase.

They had seen the gods, in public,  
and through their private key holes;  
heard them thunder or sulk;  
seen them fight and compromise,  
sign a treaty of peace  
and go back on it,  
promise fair trade  
and cheat.

What did he mean  
to teach them:  
of a world beyond the world,  
better than itself,  
where everything was right?

Come off it, they said:  
you sound inspired;  
go write a book of poems; or see a doctor.

Whatever might keep them from it,  
he said, he would continue  
to hand them messages  
with meanings deeper than they knew  
and bring them closer  
to what they did not understand:

God. "Even if  
you brought over  
the sun to shine in my right hand;  
even if  
you brought over  
the moon to shine in my left hand".

I don't know what they thought;  
but I love the words  
and the man who spoke out  
in spite of them  
whatever it is he had got.

(From Alamgir Hashmi, *The Ramazan Libation*  
(Arc Publications, 2003)



## **Umer O. Thasneem (1971- )**

Thasneem is an academician by profession. He did the Master's degree in English language and literature from Farook college in 1994, followed by Ph.D. from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT (Bombay) in 2004. He took his second Master's degree in Culture and Society from London School of Economics and Political Science in 2009. He had a teaching stint at WMO College, Wayanad, and served as Assistant Professor at Hail University, and the King Saud University of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At present he is teaching at Calicut.

Thasneem's biography of the Prophet in verse has been favourably commented upon in knowledgeable circles. The following extracts are selected from *The Soul of the Desert*, the said biography.



## **Taif Proves Deaf**

One day, disappointed  
At Meccan obstinacy.  
And frustrated with their bile and villainy,  
Al Mustafa set out for Taif,  
A hill station  
Many miles off Mecca.

In the company of,  
Zayd bin Harith  
He went to Taif  
To preach his mission,  
He spent ten days in Taif  
Meeting leaders of several clans;  
Talking to them about Islam.

But Taif proved deaf.  
The prophet found the fertile hills  
A barren land for the new faith.

Incensed at his  
Call to shun idols  
And worship the One and Only God  
People turned against Muhammad.  
They pelted him with stones;  
Unleashed their dogs to bark at him;  
And egged the children on  
To chase him out of town.

Al Mustafa's body was bruised and bleeding.  
Blood trickled out of his open wounds  
He turned to God Almighty:  
He beseeched the Most Merciful Lord

Turn Taif into a land of faith.  
And shower his mercy upon children of those infidels  
Who drove him out of their city



## **Badr Bravado**

Those humble outcasts  
Who could hardly a sword wield  
Seemed suddenly  
Charged with strength unworldly.  
They swooped on Quraysh like falcons;  
Meccan heads began to roll.

Ripe heads of Shybah, Abu Jahl and Waleed fell  
Like ripe melons ready for plunder.  
When the battle was done and the dust settled,  
The Quraysh bit dust:  
Their best heads lay severed on the battlefield:  
Broken trunks of headless, limbless trees;  
Their insolent eyes shrunken like dry dates!  
Seventy of their men were taken prisoners.  
Those men who thirsted for his blood for a decade and more,  
Who drove him out of home;  
Who spouted  
Vilest, wildest  
Lies about him,  
Now lay at his mercy  
In the background of a battlefield  
Littered with corpses of his enemies.

In Al Mustafa's heart  
There was but no room for rancor.  
Sparing the lives of all but two,  
He treated prisoners with respect and mercy.  
He allowed them to be ransomed  
As their means permitted.

Those who could not afford  
Were given a simple task;  
Teach children of Medina  
Read and write.

Muhammad's magnanimity,  
Meccans discovered  
Was a bargain  
Stiffer  
Than his army;

Some captives were so overwhelmed  
That they chose not to dither,  
In Islam they found refuge  
For souls  
Benighted, and hearts battered.



## **Syed Ameeruddin (1940– )**

An academician by profession, Syed Ameeruddin is a distinguished Indian poet of English. He has published seven collections of poetry, including *Visioned Summits*, *Visions Delivered* and *Rainbow Rhapsodies – A Testament of Love*. His poems have been well-reviewed and acclaimed. He has also edited three anthologies of world poetry, and one miscellany of Indian Verse in English. He is widely travelled, and has attended several international poetry meets in U.S.A., China and Australia. He was awarded the Michael Madhusudan Award, and has received numerous other literary honours. He is a contributor to the Routledge Encyclopaedia of Commonwealth Literature (London), and currently he is the President of the World Poetry Society Intercontinental (WPSI).

The poem given below sums up very briefly, but faithfully, the Prophet's unflinching dedication to the Divine Message, and the essence of Islam – moral probity, spiritual purity and peace for all – the very requisites of civilization.



## **The Last Prophet**

Mohammed came  
As the last prophet  
With the same mission  
To glorify the divine 'Oneness'  
And to submit to the will of "Allah".  
Rahamatul-lil-Alamin  
Came at a time  
When chaos and confusion  
Lust and licentiousness  
Passion and pollution  
And an utter disregard  
For everything decent and divine  
Was the fashion of the day.  
In that barbaric atmosphere  
Mohammed fought a lone battle  
And voiced the principles of Eternity  
To root out the deadly Adharma.  
And to make the devilish masses  
Realize the divine glory  
The eternal principles of Truth.  
The path of Submission to the divinity  
And the Glorious path of peace,  
To establish  
The eternal principles  
Of conduct, co-existence and Dharma



## **Appendices**

Thomas Carlyle: Hero as a Prophet (Extracts)

Wolfgang von Goethe: Mahomet's Song;

Mahomet Speaks;

Plan of the Play on the Prophet

R.M. Rilke: The Calling of Mohammed

Inayat Khan: Amin, the Faithful Trustee

Isabel Anderson: The Green Turban

Golam Mostafa: Song of Adulation

Kazi Nazrul Islam: Oh Bulbul "Son of Amina"

Sharfood-din al-Busiri: The al-Burda Ode on the Prophet (Extract from English translation)

## Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881)

Born into a religious family, Carlyle originally intended to join the ministry, and so for some years was educated at an Academy at the Edinburgh University. But he changed his mind, and studied German literature and philosophy instead, which deeply influenced his life and thought. He wrote a biography of the German dramatist Schiller, translated Goethe's masterpieces (1824), and edited a four-volume anthology of selections from German authors (1827). His masterly *History of the French Revolution* appeared in 1837, and his lectures *On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History* were published in 1841.

The second lecture of the series is titled *The Hero as a Prophet: Mahomet-Islam*. The brief extracts reproduced below are culled from this long and momentous lecture.



## **Hero as a Prophet** (Extracts)

Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he was a scheming Impostor, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any one. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only. When Pococke inquired of Grotius: Where the proof was of that story of the pigeon, trained to pick peas from Mahomet's ear, and pass for an angel dictating to him? Grotius answered that there was no proof! It is really time to dismiss all that. The word this man spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred and eighty millions of men these twelve hundred years. These hundred and eighty millions were made by God as well as we. A greater number of God's creatures believe in Mahomet's word at this hour, than in any other word whatever. Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spirtual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my part, cannot form any such supposition.

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Such a man is what we call an original man; he comes to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. We may call him Poet, Prophet, God; — in one way or other, we all feel that the words he utters are as no other man's words. Direct from the Inner Fact of things; — he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that.

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Forger and juggler? No, no! This great fiery heart, seething, simmering like a great furnace of thoughts, was not a juggler's. His Life was a Fact to him; this God's Universe an awful Fact and

Reality. He has faults enough. The man was an uncultured semi-barbarous Son of Nature, much of the Bedouin still clinging to him; we must take him for that. But for a wretched Simulacrum, a hungry Impostor without eyes or heart, practicing for a mess of pottage such blasphemous swindlery, forgery of celestial documents, continual high-treason against his Maker and Self, we will not and cannot take him.

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Much has been said and written about the sensuality of Mahomet's Religion; more than was just. The indulgences, criminal to us, which he permitted, were not of his appointment; he found them practiced, unquestioned from immemorial time in Arabia; what he did was to curtail them, restrict them, not on one but on many sides. His Religion is not an easy one; with rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a day, and abstinence from wine, it did not "succeed by being an easy religion".

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Mahomet himself, after all that can be said about him, was not a sensual man. We shall err widely if we consider this man as a common voluptuary, intent mainly on base enjoyments, — nay on enjoyments of any kind. His household was of the frugalest; his common diet barley-bread and water; sometimes for months there was not a fire once lighted on his hearth. They record with just pride that he would mend his own shoes, patch his own cloak. A poor, hard-toiling, ill-provided man; careless of what vulgar men toil for. Not a bad man, I should say; something better in him than hunger of any sort, — or these wild Arab men, fighting and jostling three — and — twenty years at his hand, in close contact with him always, would not have revered him so! They were wild men, bursting ever and anon into quarrel, into all kinds of fierce sincerity; without right worth and manhood, no man could have commanded them.

They called him Prophet, you say? Why, he stood there face to face with them; bare, not enshrined in any mystery; visibly clouting his own cloak, cobbling his own shoes; fighting, counselling, ordering in the midst of them; they must have seen what kind of a man he was let him be called what you like! No emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. During three-and-twenty years of rough actual trial. I find something of a veritable Hero necessary for that, of itself.

---

## Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Goethe was born into an influential family of nobles at Frankfurt. He was trained in law against his wishes, and appointed to various court positions. In 1791 he was appointed Director of the Weimar Court Theatre. His various works are valued as important pieces of world classics and translated into many languages. His contributions to literature are manifold and many-sided, but he is mainly regarded as a dramatist and a poetic genius. He acquired acquaintance with the Koran and Persian Classics. His *West-Eastern Divan* was artistically patterned on Hafiz. He often refers to Nizami, Firdausi and Rumi.

Goethe's view of the Prophet of Islam was in conspicuous contrast to Voltaire's, as a rejoinder to whose play Goethe planned his own play on the Prophet, which could not materialize in full. In his autobiography he observed: "..... there developed within me the plan of representing the life of Mahomet, whom I had never been able to regard as an impostor, chose courses which were so clearly seen by me in actual life, which lead much more to ruin than to salvation..... A short time before I had read and studied with great interest the life of the oriental prophet, and so, when the thought came to me, I was fairly well-prepared". (*Goethe's Autobiography*, tr. by R.O. Moona, Washington 8 D.C. pp. 557-58).

'Mahomet's Song' given below is taken from *The Poems of Goethe*, tr. in the original metres by Edgar Alfred Bowring, London, George Bell Sons, 1904). The second extract 'Mahomet Speaks'), is taken from *Khoold Namah* twelfth section of the *Divan*.

(Goethe: *Reineke Fox*, *West-Eastern Divan*, and *Achilleid*, tr. by Alexander Rogers, 1890).



## **Mahomet's Song**

[This song was intended to be introduced in a dramatic poem entitled *Mahomet*, the plan of which was not carried out by Goethe. He mentions that it was to have been sung by Ali towards the end of the piece, in honour of his master, Mahomet, shortly before his death, and when at the height of his glory, of which it is typical.]

See the rock-born stream!  
Like the gleam  
Of a star so bright!  
Kindly spirits  
High above the clouds  
Nourished him while youthful  
In the copse between the cliffs.

Young and fresh,  
From the clouds he danceth  
Down upon the marble rocks;  
Then tow'rd heaven  
Leaps exulting.

Through the mountain passes  
Chaseth he the colour'd pebbles,  
And, advancing like a chief,  
Tears his brother streamlets with him  
In his course.

In the valley down below  
'Neath his footsteps spring the flowers,  
And the meadow  
In his breath finds life.

Yet no shady vale can stay him,  
Nor can flowers,  
Round his knees all-softly twining  
With their loving eyes detain him;  
To the plain his course he taketh,  
Serpent-winding.

Social streamlets  
Join his waters. And now moves he  
O'er the plain in silv'ry glory,  
And the plain in him exults,  
And the rivers from the plain,  
And the streamlets from the mountain,  
Shout with joy, exclaiming: "Brother,  
Brother, take thy brethren with thee,  
With thee to thine aged father,  
To the everlasting ocean,  
Who, with arms outstretching far,  
Waiteth for us;  
Ah, in vain those arms lie open  
To embrace his yearning children;  
For the thirsty sand consumes us  
In the desert waste; the sunbeams  
Drink our life-blood; hills around us  
Into lakes would dam us! Brother,  
Take thy brethren of the plain,  
Take thy brethren of the mountain  
With thee, to thy father's arms!"

Let all come then!  
And now swells he  
Lordlier still; yea, e'en a people  
Bears his regal flood on high!

And in triumph onward rolling,  
Names to countries gives he, - cities  
Spring to light beneath his foot.

Ever, ever, on he rushes,  
Leaves the towers' flame-tipp'd summits,  
Marble palaces, the off-spring  
Of his fullness, far behind.

Cedar-houses bears the Atlas  
On his giant shoulders; flutt'ring  
In the breeze far, above him  
Thousand flags are gaily floating,  
Bearing witness to his might.

And so beareth he his brethren,  
All his treasures, all his children,  
Wildly shouting, to the bosom  
Of his long-expectant sire.



## **Goethe: Khoold Namah, or Book of Paradise**

*Perfected Men – After the Fight of Bedr, under the open sky.*

### **Mahomet Speaks**

Now let the enemy his dead ones mourn,  
Without a hope of coming back they lie;  
And pity not your brothers who are gone,  
For they are living there beyond the sky,

For now their strong metallic doors  
Have opened wide the planets seven,  
And sharply our transfigured friends  
Are knocking at the gates of heaven.

There over-fortunate, unhoped, they find  
Glories that in my flight there came to view,  
In one short moment whom my wondrous steed  
With me above through all the heavens flew

There trees of knowledge, as the cypress tall,  
Apples display of golden grace,  
Adorning gardens fair and flowery mead,  
Where trees of life broad shadows trace.

Now from the Eastern sweet wind blowing  
A band of heavenly maidens fly,

And as thy hungry eyes begin to taste,

One look alone will satisfy.

They stand and ask; "What didst thou undertake?  
Or projects vast or dangerous bloody fray?" they ask.

And thou hast come, they must thee hero hail;  
What are thy hero's deeds, to seek for now their task".

And soon upon thy wounds themselves they see,  
Thy title to due honour written plain;  
Fortune and grandeur, all have passed away,  
Now for the faith thy wounds alone remain

Thee to kiosks and bowers then they lead,  
With pillars rich of coloured stones of light,  
And with sweet sips of noble juice of grape  
To enter friendly do they thee invite.

Stripling! More than stripling, thou art welcome!  
All here as all are in their brightness clear;  
She to thy heart to take whom thou shalt choose,  
Thy friend and mistress of thy band is here.

Yet in no way with glories such as these  
Is the most perfect here of all content;  
Honest, and envyleless, and gay must she  
Thee many other's beauties, too present.

One leads thee onwards to another feast,  
Which each will think out with extremest care  
With many wives at home thou still hast peace,  
Of Paradise to thee is this the guerdon fair.

So for this peace thyself thou mayst prepare!  
For thou canst never farther change thy fate  
Thou will not weary with such maids as these –  
And such wine will not thee intoxicate!

This was the little that I had to tell  
Of how the sainted Mussulman himself they flout;

For Paradise for all the heroes of the Faith  
Is to the full with such things fitted out.

---

This piece is supposed to be spoken by Mohomet after the Battle  
of Bedr, first victory over enemies in A.D. 624.



**Goethe's plan of the proposed play on the Prophet as  
sketched in his Autobiography.**

- Act I:** An opening hymn which he sings alone under the clear sky, adores stars, especially Jupiter. Rising to the Eternal God.\*
- Act II:** Communicates his feelings of monotheism to his family. His wife and Ali join him, opposition from his people. Threats of violence. Must fly.
- Act III:** Overcomes his enemies. Makes his religion public. Purifies Kaaba of the idols. Has to take "recourse to cunning. The earthly element increases and extends itself, the divine retires and becomes obscured".
- Act IV:** Pursues his conquests. The now is mere pretext. Cruelties. Poisoned by a woman whose husband had been put to death.
- Act V:** Feels that he is poisoned. Revival of composure and the loftier ideas "make him worthy of admiration". He purifies his doctrine, establishes his kingdom and dies.

(Extract from Goethe's *Autobiography: Poetry and Truth From My own Life*. Tr. by R.O. Moona; Public Affairs Press, 2153 Florida Avenue, Washington 8, D.C.)

\* (Cf. Abraham's experience, Koran – 6:76-79)

## **Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926)**

Rilke was a famous German lyric poet and writer of lyrical prose. His early poetry was of indifferent nature and quality. But his two Russian visits shaped his philosophy and deepened his religious experience that crystallized in *The Book of Hours* (1905) whose central theme is Death. From early emotionalism he progressed to an objective vision of poetry, as reflected in *The Book of Pictures*. His *New Poems* (1907–8), written under inspiration from the French sculptor, Roden, represent his mature philosophy and expression. His prose book *Sketches of Malte Laurids Brigge* explores the relationship between a sensitive poet and an aggressive environment. The *Divino Elegies*, begun soon after World War I explores the theme further, suggesting the poet's choice of a satisfactory spiritual position in an ethos of social and moral decay. *Sonnets* (1923) mark a sudden spurt of inspiration.

The following piece *The Calling of Mohammed* is about the First Revelation, and concedes its divine origin and angelic medium against the charge of forgery and imposture prevalent in the West.



## **The Calling of Mohammed**

When, though, into his hiding – place the towering,  
the not to be mistaken angel came,  
erect, illustrious and overpowering:  
he then implored, renouncing every claim,  
permission to remain that over – journeyed,  
distracted merchant he was really;  
he'd never been a reader – and to see  
a word like that, too much for the most learned.

The angel, though imperious, paid no heed,  
but showed and kept on showing to the pleader  
the writing on his scroll and willed him: *Read*

He then so read, the angel's self saluted,  
And was already one who'd *been* a reader  
and could and lent his ear and executed.

Paris, 22 August – 5 September 1907  
(Rainer Maria Rilke – *New Poems*. The German Text, with a  
Translation, Introduction, and Notes by J.B. Leishman, The  
Hogarth Press, London)



## **Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927)**

Born into a famous musician family at Baroda, Inayat Khan received instruction in music and visited some famous shrines of Hindus and Muslims. His initiation into the *Chishti* order was inspired by a dream in which he saw a gathering of prophets and saints enjoying a *sama* (audition). He left India in 1910, and lectured on music and Sufism at the universities of Columbia, Berkley and Los Angeles, established his rather heterogeneous Sufi orders in America and England. He launched a faith-neutral International Sufi Movement at Geneva early in the twentieth Century. His writings and lectures have been published in 14 volumes, and the objectives of this Movement are elaborated in an appendix in volume I of his works. It stands for the universal brotherhood of man, and bridging the gulf between the East and the West. In his own words: "The Sufi message is not for a particular race, nation or Church. It is a call to unite in wisdom."

The following play highlights the Prophet's teachings and example relevant to the modern age. In deference the Muslim tradition against any physical representation of the Prophet, Inayat Khan has kept his character anonymous. He is only called 'Amin' instead, the sobriquet conferred on him by the Qureish of Mecca is used.



## **Amin, the Faithful Trustee (Gist)**

The play has Four acts of three scenes each. Main characters: Amin, Halima (foster-mother), Talib, Mutal, Ali, Teja, Hamadan, and the Sheriff of Mecca.

**Act I Sc. 1:** Amin (9-12 years old) staying with Halima. Helps her in the daily chores. Refuses to accept pilfered dates. Shuns his playmates in their pranks. Asks Halima about the mystery of life and death. Contemplative by nature.

**I. 2** Ali prepares a garland for the idols. Amin stops him. Feels a kind of revolt against idol-worship. Asks Mutal: "What is meant by religion? Isn't it a faith rather than a formalism?"

**I. 3** Amin accompanies Talib to Syria. The bazaar-scene in Jerusalem. Notices the people's superstitions and the corrupt priests. Disgusted with these, Amin questions Talib about good and evil.

**II. 1** Amin with Teja, to report on his business transactions in Syria on her behalf. She likes him. His modesty, selflessness and caring nature revealed in the interview. She offers herself in marriage to him. Because of an impending invasion he is suddenly called to the front.

**II. 2** Teja anxiously awaits his return. Amin returns successful. "I tried to do my duty.... Success and failure are both in His hands without whose will nothing moves in the Universe". The experience of war has taught him to love his enemies. "I am beginning to consider all men in the world my people".

II.3 A portrait presented to him by Teja. Dancing girls perform a wedding-dance. He does not object to it, but asks them not to unveil themselves.

III.1 In meditation at Hera. Resolves: "I must seek God myself first before I speak of goodness to my fellow-men". First revelation follows.

III.2 At Teja's house. Tells her of his "indescribable experience" and fears. She consoles and reassures him: "You do not know how good you have been to all! most attentive in your duties, persevering in your labours, honest in your business dealings, a brave soldier..... a wise peace-maker.... an ideal husband to me, and a father so kind and loving". Hamadan drops in, the matter is referred to him. He sees a reformer and true Prophet in Amin, and predicts hardships and stiff opposition, followed by success.

III.3 Amin preaches in the streets and public places. Is forced into exile.

IV.1 Some followers of Amin seek refuge in Yemen. Amin is conducted to the Chief's Court there, who questions him on his Message. Satisfied by Amin's answers, the Chief grants them asylum.

IV.2 Amin sitting with the Chief. The envoy of the Meccans arrives to demand the fugitives' externment. The Chief refuses, and offers to accompany Amin to Mecca to defend him.

IV.3 Mecca's Town hall. Impending invasion. The Sheriff in the hall. The town falls. Amin enters in a general's uniform. Sheriff surrenders. Amin's former tormentors

brought in as captives. Amin forgives and frees them, and refuses the crown and scepter offered to him. He spells out his Message: "Believe in one God. Remove the gods of Ka'ba ... perform your prayers ... Rich or poor, saint or sinner all on one level ... To God alone all praise is due .... I am a man, one like any of you, subject to pain or death .... I leave this sacred manuscript with you, for you to hand over to the coming generation, uncorrupted".

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Gist of the play *Amin, the Faithful Trustee* from Vol. 12 of *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, published by International Headquarters of the Sufi Movement, Geneva.

## **Isabel Anderson (1876–1948)**

The littérateur, Mrs Larz Anderson, born at Boston, wrote under the penname of Isabel Anderson. She was a well-known American writer of the first four decades of the twentieth century. Her early works included *The Great Horse* (1909) and *The Spell of Japan* (1914). Later she took to sea-travelogue writing, and produced two interesting works – *Circling South America* and *Circling Africa* (1929). Her two poetry collections *I Hear A Call* and *The Whole World Over* appeared in 1933 and 1949 respectively.

The play about the Prophet, synopsized below, centres around the mythical miracles attributed to him and the role of Khadija in his life.



## **The Green Turban (Gist)**

One – Act play. No scene-divisions – Four episodes from the Prophet's life are introduced. Characters: Abu Talib, Bahira, Helema, Khadija and Mohammed.

The play opens with the Muezzin's call to prayers.

Abu Talib and Bahira gathered on the roof-top of a house after dusk fall on the day of nativity. Strange lights seen in the sky. Bahira sees Gabriel descending, and the houris dancing. Helema (foster-mother) brings the tidings of birth, and reports that the babe raised his eyes to heaven, and spoke: "Allah is great. There is no God but Allah! And I Mohammed, am his Prophet". She also relates some miracles reported by the nomads – rivers swelled and overflowed the desert, Zoroaster's sacred fire was extinguished. A soothsayer reports Lucifer interred in the deep sea.

The infant's father died when he was two years old. When sixteen, Helema took him to her tent in the desert. More miracles happen – animals bow to him. Sudden prosperity blesses the family. Gabriel cleanses Mohammed's heart, and announces the gift of healing to him, and places in his hands a golden book. Asks him to read it: "Read in the name of Allah, who created all things. Read by the grace of Allah who teacheth man that what he knoweth not". A Chorus tells the hour and glory of the Book's descent.

Years pass. Mohammed in a caravan bound for Syria with Talib, Bahira, Ahmed and Ali (Helema's two sons). Khadija comes with her crippled sister, Satiha, to implore Bahira to heal her. As Mohammed enters, a dry bush revives. He departs for contemplation. Khadija feels attracted, and proposes to him through Ali. The offer surprises Muhammed, but he awaits the divine will. Prince Habib (father of Khadija) arrives with his two daughters, and scoffingly asks for a miracle from Mohammed, whose turban now emits green

ashes, and Satiha is rid of a jinn, and is fully healed. They depart. Gabriel and the Borak appear again.

A soothsayer reports that the Borak flies Mohammed back to Mecca. He preaches there, frequents Mt Hera. Khadija awaits his return home, while Satiha sings a song in praise of Mecca. Mohammed returns chased by a hooting mob. Khadija chides and disperses them. Mohammed feels depressed and dispirited; she heartens him: "Oh, my dear husband, even if thy followers forsake thee, many more will arise who will believe. Art thou not pious, sober, charitable? Hast thou not fed the hungry and clothed the naked, helped the traveller, protected the weak?" She outstares and scares away a jinn grimacing at Mohammed.

The soothsayer sums up some later events. Flight to Medina; the Prophet's success there; death at the age of 62. Islam flourishes now throughout the East.

The play closes with the Muezzin's call to prayer.

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Gist based on the text in: *The Green Turban and Under the Bo Tree* (Two One-Act Plays by Isabel Anderson, Litt. D., LLD - The Christopher Publishing House, Boston, USA, 1937).

## **Golam Mostofa (1897–1964)**

A famous Bangladeshi Islamic writer and poet, he came from a family of scholars. He retired as headmaster of a Zila school in 1949, and was acclaimed as a translator of many poems and books from Arabic, Urdu and English into Bengali. His 'hamds' and 'nats' are still a popular feature of 'milads' (Prophet's nativity celebrations) in the country. His most famous and popular work is the biography of the Prophet in verse – *Bishwanabi*. In recognition of his contribution to literature he was awarded the Sitara-i-Imtiaz in 1962 and the Pakistan President's medal.

His adulatory song on the Prophet was translated by Farida Majid, and published in the *Minaret* (New York) in 1982.



## **Song of Adulation for the Holy Prophet**

O the crowning jewel of Mankind, Noor-e-Mohammad,  
You are the ever-dearest, ever-beloved of the world!  
The best creation of all creations, adored by God,  
You are the blessing on earth from the heaven above.

First conceived in the beginning of all things,  
You are the last arrival.

Set on a cosmic journey, you are the traveler eternal.  
In your eyes the Divine Light, in your hand the Holy Qur'an,  
You are the reward of all our supplications, the peerless, precious  
gem!

Yet, you are one of us, a brother, a man of earthly dust,  
In all our joys and sorrows of life we find you in our midst.

You have honored all humanity and made our souls so proud –  
O glory, glory be the day you set your foot in this world!



## **Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899–1976)**

Compulsive rebel, inspired lyricist and passionate syncretist, Nazrul Islam was one of the most luminous stars of Bengali literature and was bracketed by many with Rabindranath Tagore. At school he studied Persian and Sanskrit. He wrote on Islamic and revolutionary themes with equal ease. He translated the poems of Hafiz, and introduced the ghazal writing in Bengali. With the help of some scholars he rendered 34 surahs of the Koran into Bengali, and versified the life of the Prophet – *Moru-Bhaskar* – the Sun of the Desert. He also wrote poems on the tragedy of Karbala, and Muslim sacrificial rituals.

The two short pieces on Muhammad, reproduced below, are steeped in devotion and lyricism. They have been rendered into English sensitively by Professor Nashid Kamal.



## Oh Bulbul

Oh Bulbul

You must be the one who  
First chanted the name of Muhammad?  
That's the reason your song  
Sounds so sweet!

Oh rose, you must've touched  
His feet secretly  
Hence, the scent of his feet  
Smells in your perfume

You saw my Prophet in a rendezvous  
Adorned yourself with his light  
Oh bee, you glow in deep love  
Oh bee, were you the first to  
Kiss his feet  
Is it that happiness  
With which you keep buzzing  
And announcing to the world?



## **Son of Amina**

Son of Amina dances in the arms of Halima  
With the rhythm, the golden prayer beads  
Dance in the golden arms

Pearls drop when he cries and  
Precious gems when he smiles  
The moon of Eid  
Sparkles with the same joy  
In his childish utterances  
He chants the verses of God

The thousands of stars and planets  
Had witnessed the dance  
Hence they wonder in the sky  
Night and day in trance  
The entire world had cried  
That day, Ya Muhammad!

The rhythm of this dance is written  
In the verses of the Quran  
The sound of Taqbir captures that joy  
If I were there, I'd be sold  
Under his feet



## **Sharfood-din al-Busiri (1213–1296)**

Al-Busiri's *Kasida-i-Burda* is the most renowned Arabic panegyric on the Prophet, and is believed by many to have therapeutic virtues. Al-Busiri had a serious paralytic stroke, and he was miraculously cured by a vision of the Prophet who bestowed the 'burda' (cloak) on him which led to his recovery, hence the title *Burda*. More than ninety commentaries are known to have been penned on it, the most famous being the commentary by Abu Shama Abdal Rahman (1199-1266).

The following extract is taken from the English translation included in *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran* by John Davenport (London; J. Davy and Sons; 1869).



**Extract from *Kasida-i-Burda***

Mohammed is the Prince of both the worlds,  
That of men and that of Genii.  
Sovereign, likewise, is he of the two worlds  
Of Arabians and of barbarians.  
He is our Prophet, who unto us prescribeth  
What we should do and what we should avoid.  
Of all men Mohammed the most truthful is,  
Whether he affirm or whether he deny;  
He is the friend of God; his intercession it is  
On which alone our every hope is based;  
And in him alone a defence is to be sought  
Against the most appalling of dangers.  
It is he that hath called the sons of men  
To know the true, the only God;  
Whoever shall lay fast hold upon him  
Graspeth a cable that will not part asunder.  
All other prophets Mohammed hath surpassed  
By the excellence of his external qualities,  
By his moral and intellectual gifts.  
In virtue and in knowledge none approacheth him.  
From God's apostle every soul soliciteth  
One draught from out the ocean of his knowledge,  
One drop of the copious showers of his virtues.  
Near Mohammed each filleth the rank befitting him,  
For as a point or accent is to the written word,  
So are their knowledge and virtue in comparison of his.  
He it is who is alike perfect and estimable  
By the qualities and graces of the heart and person,

The Creator of the soul selected him for friend;  
No earthly being can aspire to share with him  
His incomparable and boundless virtues.



## **Glossary**

**Abbas:** (occurs in Southey's poem. See below Abbas-bin-Abdul Muttalib).

**Abbas-bin-Abdul Muttalib:** Paternal uncle of the Prophet. He was the richest man of the clan.

**Abdallah/Abdullah/Abdalla:** The Prophet's father.

**Abdullah Ibn-e-Maktoom:** An early blind Muslim who was inadvertently overlooked by the Prophet in an Assembly. A Koranic verse descended on the Prophet, cautioning him against the oversight.

**Abubeker/Abu Beker/Abu Bakr:** The prophet's companion, one of the earliest Muslims succeeded him as the first Caliph of Islam.

**Abu Jahl:** His real name was Abu-l Hakam. He was one of the most malevolent enemies of the Prophet and Islam.

**Abu Obeidah:** An early companion and counsellor of the Prophet.

**Abu Talib:** Uncle of the Prophet, his guardian during his adolescence, and protector against the Qureish, Father of Ali.

**Adharma:** Immorality; state of spiritual and moral darkness.

**Afform:** Formed

**Ali:** The Prophet's beloved cousin and ward. Married his daughter Fatima. The fourth Caliph of Islam (in Macleod's poem the fictitious name of Zeid).

**Alisaunder:** Alexandria

**Amar bin Awf:** An early Muslim of Medina. The Prophet stayed with him on his arrival at Medina, after flight from Mecca.

**Amina:** The Prophet's mother.

**(Al) Aqbah:** A habitation between Mecca and Medina. The Prophet met and made a covenant of peace with a delegation of the Medinites there.

**Aaron:** Prophet Haroon, brother of Moses.

**Ar-Raschid:** Guide to the right path. A holy name of Allah.

**Ayesha:** The beloved wife of the Prophet, and daughter of Abu Bakr.

**Azrael:** The angel of death.

**Badr/Bedr:** A site near the Red Sea Coast. The first Muslim victory by the three hundred band over the far outnumbering Meccan force was won here. The Prophet personally commanded the Muslim party.

**Bahira:** A Christian monk of Basra, who greeted and foretold prophethood, when the Prophet was on a business trip there with his uncle, Abu Talib.

**Bilal:** An Egyptian, freed bondsman who was tortured for embracing Islam. He was made the muazzin (caller to prayer) by the Prophet.

**Black Stone:** A heavenly stone, fallen from the sky, and fixed to the Kaaba wall when it was built by Abraham.

**Bole:** Bull

**Book:** Koran

**Borack:** The mount brought by Gabriel for the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem en-route to the Divine Seat.

**Caaba/Ka'ba/Kaaba:** Kaaba, the first prayer house for Allah made by Abraham.

**Cardigan:** Khadija (in Langland and Lydgate)

- Chrysoprase:** An apple-green gem-stone
- Cloth of Unity:** The sheet on which the Prophet placed the Black Stone to be refixed at the rebuilding of the Kaaba ~ as a solution to the contesting tribes' dissensions about the honour of handling it.
- Clomb:** Climbed
- Devoir:** Homage
- Dharma:** Spiritual and moral enlightenment
- Dionysian:** Sensual and emotionally overcharged pagan rites, relating to the Greek god, Dionysus.
- Dissembling:** Dissembling, pretending
- Enoch:** A Biblical seer, father of Methuselah. Idris in Muslim lore.
- Fette:** Fetch
- Ghostly:** Heavenly, relating to the Holy Ghost.
- Grotius:** Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Dutch statesman and jurist.
- Hadramaut:** A southern province of Arabia, adjoining Yemen.
- Hashemites:** An Arab clan, claiming descent from Hashem.
- Hamza:** A brave son of Abdul Muttalib. Uncle of the Prophet. Killed in the battle of Uhad.
- Halima/Helema/Helima:** The foster-mother of the Prophet.
- Heraclius:** The Byzantine emperor in the age of the Prophet – Defeated the Persians (625) and wrested Syria from them.
- Hie:** Go
- Hira:** Cave in Mt Hira in the vicinity of Mecca.
- Hismaelites:** Ismaelites
- Hobal/Hubal:** The god idol that stood in Mecca in pre-Islamic days.

**Hunata:** (plural of Hanif) Virtuous and pious men, given to meditative retreats in pre-Islamic Arabia.

**Israfael:** The archangel who will announce the Doomsday with the blasts of a trumpet.

**Jehovah:** Principal name of God in the Bible.

**Khadija/Cadijah:** Daughter of al-Khawaled. First wife of the Prophet.

**Laqad Karramna Bani Adam:** Verily, We (God) have honoured the progeny of Adam.

**Lusshborg:** A counterfeit, worthless coin (from Luxembourg in the later Middle Ages).

**Masjid-e-Nabawi:** The Prophet's mosque at Medina.

**Matins:** Morning service in the Churah

**Mede:** Earliest Iranians

**Messie:** Messiah

**Millat:** Community, nation

**Miskat-al Masabeh:** A highly rated collection of the traditions and sayings of the Prophet by Abd Allah Khatib Al-Tabrizi (d. 1340/41). It is an expanded version of an earlier collection Masabih al-Sunnah.

**Monker/Nakir:** The angels who will question the dead in the graves about their deeds.

**Muezzin:** The caller to prayers

**Muta'/Mutah plain:** Muta' is a town on the Syrian border. The Muslims met a crushing defeat by the Byzantine army there in the Prophet's life time.

**Nakir:** See Monker above.

**Nedjd:** Central region (part) of Arabia.

**Negus:** King of Abyssinia. His general, Abraha, who later proclaimed independence in South Arabia, raided Mecca (mentioned in the Koran).

**Omar/Umar:** Son of Khattab. He was a noted warrior, an inveterate enemy of Islam before his conversion to Islam, became its invincible champion later. Second caliph of Islam.

**Perse:** Persia

**Phocas:** The Byzantine emperor preceding Heraclius.

**Phoebes:** Sun

**Pigeon affrighted:** Refers to the episode of the pigeon flying scared from the cave where the Prophet and Abu Bakr had hidden themselves on their flight from Mecca for Medina. The Meccan pursuers reached the cave's mouth, but were put off by the pigeon's flight, taking it as a proof that the cave was unvisited previously by any human being.

**Qaswa:** The Prophet's favourite camel.

**Quba:** A site two leagues away from Medina. Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr, on their flight from Mecca, stayed there for four days before reaching Medina. Ali also joined them there.

**Rabeeya-bin-Harris:** A companion of the Prophet. He accompanied the latter on his last pilgrimage, and at the time of the Prophet's sermon repeated it sentence by sentence, asking the audience if they had fully understood it.

**Rahamatul-lil-Alamin:** Blessing for the universe

**Rehearse:** Tells, relates

**Saad:** Sa'd ibn Muadh, the chieftain of the tribe of Bani Aws.

**Safa:** A hill in Mecca.

**Saheel-bin Umar:** A captive in the Battle of Badr. He was a great orator.

**Sajda:** Prostration

**Sadr:** According to the Muslim tradition, a berry tree on the last frontier-post of the seventh sphere, beyond which no access is possible.

**Shybah:** The nephew of Abdul Muttalib's elder brother, Hashim. On his attaining adulthood Abdul Muttalib brought him over to Mecca.

**Shahadah:** Martyrdom, witness

**Sinai:** The mountain in Palestine from where the Prophet took off on the celestial visit.

**Sumaiya:** An early Muslim who was tortured to death brutally by the Qureish of Mecca.

**Surrey:** Syria

**Taif/Tayef:** An agricultural place to the South East of Mecca. It was Mecca's grainery.

**Taqbir/Takbir:** The Call to glorify Allah.

**Wahi:** The revelation, message from Allah.

**Wax:** Rise to a higher position

**Yasir:** An early Muslim whose legs were torn apart by the Meccan torturers.

**Yathreb:** Old name of Medina

**Zayd bin Harith:** The Prophet's bondsman, and adopted son, who attained martyrdom at the Battle of Mu'tah in 629. He married Zeinab, and divorced her later.

**Zeinab:** Daughter of Jhash, and Prophet's cousin. She was married to Zayd bin Harith, and after her divorce was espoused to the Prophet.

The fact of frequent, adverse allusions to the Prophet of Islam in European and English literatures is well known; but little is known about the positive poems on him in English. They came to be written in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Coleridge and Southey pioneered the change. Some others followed later, and the tradition continues still. These poems, however, lie scattered in rare works, and despite their considerable merit, have not been collected together so far. The present anthology seeks to fill the desideratum. The 'Historical Introduction', appended to the book, explains the genesis and nature of this traditional literary antagonism responsible for delay in the expression of poetic tributes to the Prophet in English. The poems collected here are variously biographical, appreciative and devotional in approach. While the Muslims may find them particularly heart-warming, others across the faiths may find the Prophet's character and moral values reflected in them instructive and enlightening. Besides, Islam has been a great civilizing force in history, and an increased awareness of the humanist message and ideals of its founder through the medium of poetry may contribute in some measure to the cause of interfaith tolerance and understanding, urgently needed in the contemporary scenario of eruptive fanaticism and retributive, belligerent counter-extremism. A few negative poems are included to make the anthology more representatives in character, and to mark English Muse's shift from pervasive hatred to understanding and appreciation. The anthology's time-spectrum spreads from the fourteenth century to the present age. Poets from the UK, USA, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh figure here. In view of their historical importance English translations of Goethe's two remarkable poems on Mohammad, and extracts from Carlyle's famous lecture on Prophet as a Hero are given in separate appendices. Gists of two rare English plays on the Prophet are also included in an appendix each.

**Masood ul Hasan** has a doctorate in English literature from the University of Liverpool, UK, and has taught at the Aligarh Muslim University for four decades. He served as Chairman of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, and the Dean, Faculty of Arts, at the same university. He retired as Professor in 1988. His publications include *Donne's Imagery*; *Francis Quarles: A Critical Assessment*; *Rare English Books in India*; *Miltoniana in India* (which contains translations of Milton's works into the major Indian languages); *Sufism and English Literature: From Chaucer to the Modern Age*; and *Epithalamiums: An Anthology of Marriage Poems From Chaucer to the Modern Age* (co-edited with S. Naqi H. Jafri).



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